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ACTS OF THE APOSTLES,

WITH NOTES,

CRITICAL, EXPLANATORY, AND PRACTICAL,

DESIGNED FOR BOTH PASTORS AND PEOPLE.

BY

REV. HENRY COWLES, D.D.

“The words that I speak unto you—they are spirit and they are life.”

JOHN 6 : 63.

NEW YORK:

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,

1, 3, AND 5 BOND STREET.

1883.

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ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

INTRODUCTION.

THIS book holds a middle place between the Gospel History and the Epistles, being an historic continuation of the former and a natural introduction of the latter.—To introduce the book to the diligent reader, I propose to treat of the following points :

I. Authorship:

II. Date of its composition:

III. Its authenticity as history:

IV. The objects of the book:

V. Its points of special value:

VI. The chronology of its important events.

I. *Authorship.*

In his first words the author identifies himself with the author of the Gospel History by Luke, addressing the same Theophilus here as there, and proposing to take up the history here at the point where he laid it down there. Hence if that Gospel History was written by Luke, so is this "Acts of the Apostles." The former writes out the personal history of Jesus in the points mainly of his miracles and of his preaching—"all that Jesus began both to do and to teach"—down to his ascension. This latter takes up the thread of the history dropped there and continues it to the close of Paul's first imprisonment at Rome.

Further, this identity of authorship is amply established by its similarity of style compared with that of the Gospel. This argument can not be presented in its full strength to the merely English reader, these peculiarities of style pertaining mainly to the original Greek. In that language they are very manifest and convincing. Luke approaches more nearly to the style of classic Greek than any other

New Testament writer, indicating that this was probably his vernacular, and that he had enjoyed fair advantages for culture.

Finally, the testimony of the early Christian Fathers to Luke as the author is unanimous and decisive. Irenæus (A. D. 178)—himself intimate with some associates of the Apostles—knew the book well, and regarded it as undeniably the work of Luke. Clemens of Alexandria (flourished A. D. 190) regarded Luke as the author; as do also Tertullian (A. D. 200); Eusebius (A. D. 325) from whom has come down this statement: "Luke, a native of Antioch, by profession a physician, was mostly Paul's companion, though he associated not a little with the other apostles. He has left us examples of the art of healing souls, which he acquired from the apostles, in two divinely inspired books; first in the Gospel, which he testifies to have written according to what eye-witnesses and ministers of the word delivered to him from the beginning, all which also he says that he investigated from the first; and secondly, in the Acts of the Apostles, which he composed not from report, as in the other case, but according to his own personal observation."

II. *Date of its Composition.*

The most rational assumption is that the author continued his history fully up to the time when he wrote, so that the last recorded event may be assumed to give, proximately at least, the time of his writing. On this assumption, we shall date the book two years after Paul's first imprisonment at Rome commenced (Acts 28: 30)—which may be assumed to be the date of his release. This line of argument fixes the date about A. D. 63.

III. *Its Authenticity as History.*

This admits of being expanded at great length; but it must suffice to refer to three specific sources of testimony.

1. Its allusions to well known cities, to historic characters, and to the customs and events of his time, are everywhere found on the most searching examination to be made with surprising accuracy. Ephesus, Corinth, Athens, Antioch, Rome, are well known cities. Luke's allusions to them always testify to his accurate knowledge of what they were. So the death of Herod Agrippa (Acts 12): the administrations of Felix and of Festus, are fixed dates with

which Luke's narrative corresponds. He knew that Philippi was a Roman colony (Acts 16 : 12).

2. The words and deeds which he attributes to his principal, best known characters (*e. g.*, Peter and Paul) are entirely in harmony with all else that is known of these men. This is the same Peter who appears in the gospel history and in his own Epistles; the same Paul whose character stands out so clearly in his Epistles. The strong characteristics of Paul as seen in his Epistles are thoroughly foreshadowed in this book. Thus every thing wears the stamp of historic authenticity.

3. The coincidences between the incidental notices in the Acts, and the corresponding notices in the Epistles, will bear the closest examination. That they are manifestly and certainly *undesigned*, and therefore are not the result of plan—are not wrought up for fiction, but are the straightforward, honest showing of truth,—has been admirably brought out in Paley's "*Horæ Paulinæ*"—a presentation of this line of argument which can not well be surpassed, and which as an argument for the authenticity of the book, has never been refuted.

IV. *The Objects of this Book.*

To take up and continue the gospel history; to show how the great work of preaching Christ and his gospel was prosecuted by the apostles after the ascension of their Lord; under what circumstances; by the agency of what leading actors, and against what chief obstacles. It seems to have been one very special object to show the fulfillment of the great promise of the Holy Ghost; to present striking manifestations of his presence and power, and, not least, to bear witness that the success of this great enterprise was due to his power, so that this history might fitly have been called—not "*The Acts of the Apostles*," but "*The Achievements of the Holy Ghost*." For those were glorious manifestations of his power.—In pursuance of this special object the scenes of the great Pentecost give supreme prominence to the work of the Holy Ghost; the new boldness, wisdom and magnetic force manifested in the apostles come remarkably into the foreground of the history: the wonderful spirit and power of Stephen are attributed to his being full of the Holy Ghost; the conversion of Saul comes in the same line of testimony; the guidance and success vouchsafed to Philip the evangelist, to Peter also, and to Paul all along in his

great gospel labors, serve to reveal the matchless wisdom and efficiency imparted to man by the Spirit of God.

As to the historic aims of the book, it does not attempt a complete history of the labors of all the apostles. The first twelve chapters keep Peter mostly in the foreground. The rest of the book traces the history of Paul. In the first great division, John is sometimes seen by the side of Peter; Stephen and Philip from the first seven deacons and evangelists (Acts 6) come into the narrative; while in the latter portion we have notices of Paul's fellow-laborers—Barnabas, Silas and Timothy.

Moreover, this book throws valuable light upon the missionary policy of the apostles in the point of special endeavors to plant the gospel in great radiating centers of power. The book is chiefly occupied with the endeavors to plant strong churches in Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Philippi, Corinth, and Rome. To take and to hold for Christ these great strategic points was a first and controlling measure of their policy. This history is chiefly occupied with the planting of churches in these strong centers of population and of influence.

Finally, the history was manifestly shaped to bear upon the question (then of vital importance)—of the exclusive claims of the Jews, and the rights of Gentiles to gospel blessings. The precise point of this question was whether the Gentile must of necessity come into this new kingdom *through Judaism*; or whether the middle wall of partition should be broken down, and his access be free as that of the Jew himself. The history in this book shows accordingly how Peter's mind was disabused of his life-long national prejudices on this point; and also how the repugnance of the Jew to his gospel preaching drove Paul forth from them to the Gentiles. The great council (Acts 15) over the main points in this controversy was a step of immense and glorious progress toward Gospel emancipation from Jewish bondage.

V. The *value* of this book has been already suggested. It is the first great chapter of church history and the best. Taking up the thread of missionary history where it was temporarily dropped by the death of Christ, it shows how the work was prosecuted by the original apostles and especially by the extraordinary accession of a new convert in the person of Saul the persecutor.

High above all its other points of value is the light it

throws upon the agencies and powers of the Holy Ghost. It was of great consequence that Jesus, shortly before his death, spake so freely and fully of the work of the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth (then mostly prospective). This history fills out those revelations of the Spirit's agency by describing minutely the manifestations of his power in the souls of men "full of the Holy Ghost."—Hence this book records the grandest illustrations of Christian heroism. Here all along are men endued with the Holy Ghost and with his great power from on high. We have the record of their zeal, their devotion, their self-consecration, and of their glorious success in the saving of men. These are the best lessons of this book of history—the best lessons, indeed, next to the words of Jesus, which any book could give.

VI. *The Chronology of its Principal Events.*

It may be convenient to the reader to have here a group of some of these most useful dates.

1. *The year of Saul's conversion.*—The evidence is only probable. Paul speaks (Gal. 1: 17, 18) of going into Arabia soon after his conversion; and then returning again to Damascus; and moreover, of "going up to Jerusalem three years after" [some important event], and this is assumed to be that of his conversion.—Yet further; his first peril from persecution is referred to (2 Cor. 11: 32) as occurring at Damascus under "Aretas the king." Supposably this "Aretas" was king of a district in Great Arabia, of which Petra was the capital city. He is known to have been in hostile relations to Herod, and therefore to Rome. His occupancy of Damascus must have been brief. On grounds connected with the power of the Roman emperors over Damascus, it is supposed to have ended about A. D. 39. Hence Paul's conversion may be with much probability assigned to A. D. 36.

2. The death of Herod Agrippa (Acts 12: 2, 3) is fixed beyond doubt by the testimony of Josephus, in the year A. D. 44, after a reign of three years. This event being well established carries with it the other important events of this chapter 12; the martyrdom of James; the deliverance of Peter; and the first great missionary tour of Paul.

3. The administration of Felix and also of Festus. Combining the historic dates of the Roman historians and of Josephus, the point referred to (Acts 24: 27) where Felix

ended and Festus began, is fixed at A. D. 60. This determines proximately the year of Paul's arrest at Jerusalem, two years before; also of his voyage to Rome a prisoner under his appeal to Cæsar; and of its termination after two years (Acts 28: 30) when the history of this book closes.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

CHAPTER I.

Reference to his "former" history—that of the gospel (vs. 1, 2); to the events intervening between Christ's resurrection and his ascension (vs. 3-5); question by the apostles as to his restoring the kingdom to Israel and his answer (vs. 6-8); the ascension (vs. 9-11); their return to Jerusalem and what they were doing there (vs. 12-14); concerning the traitor Judas (vs. 15-20), and the appointment of a successor (vs. 21-26).

1. The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

2. Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:

Unquestionably this "former treatise" is the well known gospel of Luke, addressed to the same Theophilus. He was (presumably) a Gentile convert, for whom, therefore, and for all other Gentile converts, Luke wrote this history, as he had previously his gospel.

Of all that Jesus both did and taught *from the beginning*—a full history, both of his great deeds [miracles], and of his various instructions, from the very commencement of his public life. Noticeably, Luke's history narrates the scenes of the birth of Jesus from an earlier point and more fully than any other gospel historian.—The Gospel of Luke brought the history down to Christ's ascension, previous to which he had given that one great command to go forth into all the world and evangelize the nations. This command virtually comprehended their whole mission. It was given specially by and through the Holy Ghost. It was *his* voice through the lips of Jesus.

3. To whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

4. And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

5. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

This is a more detailed account of the period between the resurrection and the ascension.—Jesus presented himself to the disciples after his suffering of death [“passion”], proving himself to be alive by many infallible signs—the strongest which the nature of the case could admit—this Greek word being used for the strongest evidence.—Showing himself to them—[better than “being seen”]—the word signifying Christ’s active agency in placing himself before them.—“Forty days”—not continuously, all the time, but on occasions, usually of not very long duration, but amply long for all practical purposes.—Speaking, not precisely *about* the things, but saying the things themselves, making this revelation of the kingdom of God the subject-matter of his discourses. This means that the great truths of the gospel system were his themes. If we would inquire yet more definitely the precise points of his teaching during these interviews, we may infer them most surely from his discourse with the two brethren going to Emmaus (Luke 24: 25–27) and with the assembled disciples on the evening of the same day (vs. 44–48). These themes, involving the significance of his death on the cross, were at once most vital, and (up to that time) very dark to the disciples and little understood. They were in no just sense prepared to go forth preaching the gospel until they should know and appreciate the true significance of the sacrificial, atoning death of their Lord—why it behooved him to suffer and to rise from the dead; and what the old prophets meant when they said he must “bear the sins of men.”

The command, “not to depart from Jerusalem,” was of temporary, not perpetual obligation. They were not to go till they had received the Holy Ghost—supposably, not till they should receive directions to go.

“Wait for the promise”—more precisely, the *blessing promised*. Promised by the Father—*i. e.*, promised to come from the Father, Jesus having said, “I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter” (John 14: 16).

As water was the standing Old Testament symbol of the Spirit, so baptism supplied the illustration of his descent and mode of communication. John the Baptist gave this most significant formula,—“I baptize you with water: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 3: 11). In this formula John only followed the symbolism of the old prophets:—“Until the Spirit be *poured* upon us from on high” (Isa. 32: 15); “It shall come to pass in the last days that I will *pour out* my Spirit, etc. (Joel 2: 28, 29); “Then will I *sprinkle* clean water upon you”—explained to mean—“A new heart will I give you; a new spirit I will put within you” (Ezek. 36: 25–27).

In this case Jesus looked to the scenes of the great Pentecost, then “not many days hence,” *i. e.*, but ten days after his ascension. The *coming down of the Spirit* upon the apostles was the grand event of that ever-memorable scene—the very baptism of the Holy Ghost here foretold.

6. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

7. And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

8. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

This question of theirs shows what was uppermost in their minds, and how deeply the notion of a kingdom, like David’s over Israel, lay imbedded in their souls. Would not this be the time for bringing back to Israel that lost supremacy and independence?

Their gross misconceptions as to the nature of his kingdom, which he had labored so long and so unsuccessfully to displace, he passes for the moment, to speak more definitely as to the point which they made emphatic, “*at this time.*” “It is not given you to know the times or the seasons”—the chronology or the character of the great future events which the Father has reserved under his own control.—It is remarkable that here also (as in Mark 13: 32) Jesus recognizes the Father’s reservation of the question of *time*, to himself exclusively. “Of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.”—This reservation seems to include both the fixing of the time, and the revealing of it prophet-

ically to mortals.—Therefore, let your minds be at rest upon the question of *time*; do your duty, and let the great things of the future take their place in time as the Father may determine. He holds them entirely under his control.

“But ye shall have *power*”—not the same “power” as that just before spoken of. Jesus certainly does not say, When the Holy Ghost shall come upon you, ye shall have that very “power” which the Father holds exclusively and alone; viz., that of knowing the times and seasons. It is unfortunate for the English reader that these two Greek words so very unlike should both be translated by the same English word, “power.” The first means that control over events which lies in authority—the exclusive right to determine, and consequently to know; while the latter signifies that spiritual *force* which was to come upon them in and with the effusion of the Spirit—the power of truth on human souls, made effective by the Spirit’s agency.—Having received this from the Holy Ghost, they would be fully prepared to bear testimony for Christ; to become witnesses for him as to what he is; what he has said; what he has done; what his sacrificial death signifies; and how sinners may avail themselves of his offered salvation.—Let it also be noted that this “power” stands in a sort of contrast with that “power” of the Father (in v. 7), as if Jesus would say to them—Leave to the Father the power [control] over the times of unknown future events; let it suffice you that ye are to have the far more important *power* of the Holy Ghost, in the exercise of which, ye may preach my gospel and bear witness to my death and resurrection, and so turn men by thousands from their sins to God. Let this gift of the Spirit’s power be your supreme aspiration—the gift ye are to implore with persistent, believing prayer; and let it perfectly meet and entirely fill the largest desires of your souls.

Noticeably, in this reply, Jesus passes without definite remark, that gross misconception of theirs as to the nature of his kingdom—apparently relying upon the teaching Spirit, then about to come, to make clear to their minds the spiritual nature of his kingdom, and so remove that old misapprehension by the expulsive power of the far better and purer truths of gospel salvation.

Note also that the range (geographically) of this witnessing for Christ—“Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth,” was pleasantly suggestive of the marvelous breadth of their great commission:—“Go ye into

all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." It ought to have been inspiring under the hope of doing a vast and glorious work for Jesus. How forcibly it leveled its blow against the close exclusiveness of Jew toward Gentile!—one of the gross misconceptions which the new dispensation of the Spirit was destined to displace.

9. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

10. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

11. Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

This account of the ascension supplements that which Luke gave in his "former treatise" (Luke 24: 30-32). In that it was said that Bethany was the honored place, and his uplifted hands and the final benediction were attendant circumstances of the ever-memorable scene. Here we learn his last preceding words, and that it was in their presence, immediately under their open eyes, that he was lifted up from earth, till a cloud received him and they saw him no more! Yet they continued steadfastly gazing (how could they turn to look at any thing else?)—until two men in angel whiteness came to apprise them that he had indeed ascended into the very heavens, and therefore they need gaze upward no longer: but that, in his own time, or rather in the Father's appointed time, he would surely come again in manner somewhat analogous to this which they had witnessed.—As this last statement by the angels made no allusion to the *time when* he would in like manner return, it is perhaps supposable that they inferred it might be within their own lifetime, and that the too hasty inference fostered this prevalent notion—a notion which, though erroneous, we can easily see might have been very dear to their hearts. Unfortunately they were far too eager to know the definite time of the next personal coming, and hence were exposed to gross misapprehensions.

12. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

13. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphæus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

14. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

Remembering their instructions (v. 4) not to “depart from Jerusalem,” they forthwith returned to the city, and took up quarters (so to speak) in an “upper room”—a spacious chamber probably of the sort provided for the accommodation of devout attendants upon the Passover—possibly the very same in which their own last Passover was held. Here they “abode,” holding it not merely as a place of meeting for worship but a home for their accommodation to the extent we may presume of its capacity.—Luke enumerates the eleven still faithful, adding also “the women,” well known for their noble devotion to their Master: specifying “the mother of Jesus and his brethren.” These brethren have appeared on several occasions in the Gospel history (John 2: 12 and 7: 3–5—Matt. 12: 46–50 and its parallels) but never before as being with the apostles and the godly women, “of one accord in prayer and supplication.” The great change from unbelief and semi-hostility, to penitence, faith and prayer, must have passed over them quite recently, and not improbably in connection with Christ’s personal appearance after his resurrection, to James (1 Cor. 15: 7) whom Paul seems to speak of separately as not included among the apostles.—The important thing to note here is, how they passed their time and what they were doing—all *constant, persevering, and of one heart in prayer*. This must be taken in connection with the command of Christ, stated by Luke (24: 49); “Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.” Waiting for that endowment of power was by no means waiting idly for the hours to pass till the blessing should come by the mere lapse of time. For they could not have forgotten that when Jesus at their request had taught them how to pray (as in Luke 11: 1–13), he made a very special point of persevering importunity, and then most distinctly applied this instruction to prayer for the Holy Ghost: “Ask and ye shall receive;” How much more (—more surely than earthly fathers give bread), shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?—Now, therefore, they understand well what is to be done. Prayer, with persistent importunity, with unfaltering faith in God’s promise and in the specific direction of Jesus,—prayer to be persevered in till the baptism of power should fall upon them with most manifest

fullness and unmistakable certainty—this was the main business of that long protracted prayer-meeting—a model prayer-meeting for all the future ages of time.

15. And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples: and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty).

16. Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

17. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

18. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

19. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; inso-much as that field is called in their proper tongue, *Aceldama*, that is to say, *The field of blood*.

20. For it is written in the Book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishopric let another take.

Peter moves to fill the place among the twelve, made vacant by the apostasy and death of Judas. Expanding this subject, he speaks of the doom of Judas as having been foreshadowed in definite prophecy (v. 20)—this first quotation being from Psalms 69: 25, and the second from Psalms 109: 8. Both these Psalms describe in general the case of bold, defiant enemies of God and their consequent doom—the doom being so surely the result of the sin that the case of Judas must be supposed to come under the description and to be virtually foreshadowed and even foretold here.—We may profitably notice that Peter's mode of reference to the Scriptures implies the existence of "the Book of Psalms," and that some (at least) of this book was written by David; and (of yet more importance) that it came from the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David;—*i. e.*, that David wrote under inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

The circumstances given in vs. 18, 19 (whether ascribed to Peter or to Luke) should be supplemented by other facts appearing in Matt. 27: 3-8; viz., that when Judas saw Jesus condemned to death, he repented in bitter remorse; brought back to the priests his bribe-money and threw it down at their feet, declaring—"I have sinned in betraying his innocent blood;" and that then he went away and hanged himself. The circumstances added here—that "he fell headlong, burst asunder, and all his bowels gushed out"

—are by no means improbable, requiring only a position on the edge of a precipice, and the breaking of the cord by which he was suspended. Thus the appalling scene became the more significant of his dreadful doom. We need have no difficulty in harmonizing Matthew with Peter and Luke. —Peter, speaking to those who had the circumstances fresh in mind, might properly omit some of them because well known; while Matthew, writing long after, would record only the more important historic facts.—That Judas is said to have purchased that field with the wages of his crime does not require him to have made the contract personally. It suffices that he threw back the money and that the priests applied it to purchase a burial plot which took its name from the blood-money which bought it. Thus the bloody crime of Judas immortalized itself in the name “Aceldama”—a field of blood.

21. Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22. Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

23. And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

24. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen,

25. That they may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

26. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

We see here the main purpose for which they wanted this twelfth man, viz., to be a concurrent witness with them of Christ's resurrection. This purpose suggests the requisite qualifications;—primarily, that he should have been a constant attendant upon Jesus during his whole public ministry down to the very day of his ascension. This long continued attendance would make one perfectly acquainted with the person of Jesus and competent therefore to identify his person after his resurrection. Moreover, such long companionship carried with it other vital qualifications—a loving devotion to Jesus and to his service, and a constant hearing of his discourses as a docile pupil at his feet. Peter's emphasis upon the point of his personal knowledge as preparing him for a witness must not exclude these other vital qualifications.

It seems they readily designated two men, each meeting

these conditions. Supposably the choice between them was felt to be much more difficult; so they brought this issue before the Lord to be determined by casting lots. The settlement of similar questions by casting lots, preceded (as here) by prayer, can not, perhaps, be seriously objectionable; and yet it would be a great evil to exalt this case into a rule or precedent. As a rule it is doubtless far better to have first the prayer, asking divine wisdom—the clearing of our mind from all undue influences and the guiding of our thought to the indications of God's providence and the mind of his Spirit. Then let us use the best wisdom God may vouchsafe to his waiting people.

Some have thought that God did not indorse this twelfth Apostle, but really brought forward Paul to make up the original number. The history indicates no lack of indorsement, nor does it anywhere teach or assume that Paul became one of the twelve for the special purpose here contemplated—a twelfth personal witness to Christ's resurrection.

In v. 25, the Greek word for place (in the best authorities) [topos] is twice used in close connection, but in the first case is mistranslated. It should be—Show which of these men thou hast chosen to take the *place* of this ministry from which Judas by apostasy fell that he might go to his own *place*. The place he held here with us was by no means his own. He was never fit for it. His great sin at length hurled him out of a place not his own that he might go to a place that was in every sense "his own."



CHAPTER II.

The scenes of the great Pentecost—including the descent of the Spirit (vs. 1-4); the speaking with other tongues, recognized by men of many remote countries (vs. 5-12); Peter's defense and explanation (vs. 13-21); he arraigns them for the murder of Jesus whom God has raised from the dead (vs. 22-24); proves this resurrection from the prophecy by David (vs. 25-28);—a prophecy which can not refer to David, but must refer to Jesus the Messiah (vs. 29-32); now exalted to God's right hand; made Lord and Messiah; and has shed forth the Holy Ghost (vs. 33-36);

the conviction, repentance and baptism of three thousand (vs. 37-41); their Christian life and joy (vs. 42-47.)

1. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

The feast called "the Pentecost," or "the feast of weeks," was in the order of succession the second of the three Jewish festivals, occurring fifty days after the second day of the Passover (Deut. 16: 9, 10, and Lev. 23: 15, 16). It fell at the close of the gathering of their wheat harvest, which is commemorated.—The word "Pentecost" is Greek, meaning the *fiftieth*, indicating the day as numbered from the Passover.—In the present case it is reasonably supposed that this Pentecost fell on the first day of the week, the Christian Sabbath, because the first day of the preceding Passover was the seventh day—*i. e.*, the Jewish Sabbath. (See John 19: 21.) Seven full weeks, numbered after the Jewish Sabbath, would bring the fiftieth day on the first day of the week—the day on which Jesus, after his resurrection, had repeatedly met his disciples.

It should be noticed that the "continued prayer with one accord" (1: 14), commencing at the ascension, had now been in progress ten days. Still they are all "with one accord in one place," "tarrying in Jerusalem" according to Christ's command, till they should be "endued with power from on high" (Luke 24: 49).

Now the great blessing comes.

2. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

It is not said that this *was* a mighty rushing wind, but rather, a sound *resembling* that of such a wind, filling the whole house in which they were sitting. This represents what was audible—the impression upon the ear. To the eye there was the appearance of tongues of fire, one resting on each of them. The English word "cloven" in the sense of disparted, forked, with double point, misleads the reader. The Greek word signifies only that this sheet of flame which at first filled the room, divided itself—a part to each of the company—this part resting, supposably, upon the head.—

Passing these indications made to the sense of hearing and to the sense of sight, the real effect was that all were filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak in languages before unknown to them, as the Spirit enabled them severally to speak.

This manifestation of the Spirit's presence by the sensations of sound to the ear, and to the eye by visual tongues of fire, was altogether extraordinary, out of the common course, and previously unknown in human experience. Doubtless the object was *demonstration*—such a manifestation as would make the descent of the Spirit palpable to the senses. This gift of the Spirit had been definitely predicted. It was, therefore, of vital importance that the fulfillment of this prediction should become palpable, demonstrated by unmistakable signs.—Naturally in the choice of symbols for this manifestation, regard was had to the fitness of these symbols to represent the agency of the Holy Ghost. The word "spirit" suggests wind or breath; "The wind bloweth where it listeth;" "So is every one born of the Spirit" (John 3: 8); "Jesus *breathed* upon them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John 20: 22). So "tongues as of fire" are symbols of *energy*—the energy that goes with and in uttered words, revealed truth, through which comes the normal influence of the Spirit upon human hearts. Hence the appropriateness of this symbol of the Spirit's manifestations.

The phrase, "filled with the Holy Ghost," may be said to be almost peculiar to Luke—being at least his usual phrase for the largest, richest enduement with the Spirit's presence and power. (See Acts 4: 8, 31, and 6: 3, 5, and 7: 55, and 9: 17, and 11: 24, and 13: 9, 52. Also Luke 1: 15, 41, 67, and 4: 1.)

It should be carefully noted that these audible, visible manifestations of the Spirit's presence were special, peculiar and transient—sent in this form at that time for special purposes, and never designed to illustrate the normal effects of the Spirit's power. Even the gift of tongues, though of much longer duration and designed for some other uses, seems not to have continued much if any longer than the generation then living. At first it served to arrest public attention; to bear witness to the divine mission of the apostles; and for a time to aid their access to people using these diverse languages. Moreover, it must have been forcibly suggestive of the great breadth of their gospel commission,

showing them that Jesus really meant they should go far beyond the narrow limits of Judea, or even of Samaria and Galilee, even far abroad among all nations and all spoken tongues. This gift ought to have enlarged their views of the range and scope of their great commission. It should have burst the old circumscribing compass of Jewish monopoly and shown them that the gospel was provided, not for Jews only, but for the wide world.

5. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

6. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

7. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilæans?

8. And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

9. Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

10. Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

11. Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

12. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

13. Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

These "Jews dwelling at Jerusalem," (v. 5) were not there temporarily in attendance upon the great feast, but were more permanent residents, for so the Greek word signifies. Every great city has a population more or less heterogeneous, gathered from remote localities for purposes of business or because of their social relations. Besides these attractions, Jerusalem drew many devout men to itself as being their great religious center—the seat of their temple and of its hallowed worship.—Of this large company Luke states their former geographical homes and nationalities to show how many languages must have been represented. These countries overspread Western Asia and Northern Africa. There were strangers even from Rome itself. The natural supposition is that this group of one hundred and twenty Christian men, some speaking one tongue and some another, would represent all the languages which had been vernacular to this promiscuous crowd, gathered from

all known lands.—This fact filled them with amazement. Those speakers, they noticed were all Galileans, and manifestly were not learned in the sense of being masters of various languages.

Noticeably the subject-matter of this wonderful preaching is suggested here (v. 11); “How is it that we hear them speaking the *wonderful works of God*”—i. e., the great things God had wrought for men in sending his Son in human flesh and in raising him from the dead and exalting him to be a Prince and a Savior. Filled with doubt and perplexity they are asking one another;—What might this, perhaps, be? Literally—What might this wish to be? It has a strange aspect, and its meaning is not easily understood. Some, probably the few rather than the many, ascribed it to new wine.

14. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:

15. For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

16. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;

17. And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

18. And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

19. And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke:

20. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:

21. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Peter—always the chief speaker—gave just a word to the disrespectful suggestion “new wine;” and then hastened on to the real explanation.

The third hour—with our reckoning, the hour of 9 A. M.—is too early in the day for men to be the worse for wine.—Passing that insinuation as too unreasonable and too mean for further notice, let me tell you that this scene fulfills that remarkable prophecy by Joel (2: 28–32). The present are those very “last days”—i. e., in the Christian age; and this is that wide and copious effusion of God’s Spirit—no longer restricted to prophets few in number, but shed forth upon all flesh—people of every age, of all conditions, and of either sex.—“They shall prophesy”—in a broader

sense than merely predicting future events, but including the powerful presentation and enforcement of gospel truth under the inspiring power of the Spirit, of which this sermon by Peter was a good illustration.

The strong figures (vs. 19, 20) should be interpreted by the current usage of old Testament Prophets (*e. g.*, Isa. 13: 10 and 34: 4; and Ezek. 32: 1-8); signifying, therefore, not necessarily the scenes of the final judgment, or even its immediate precursors; but great providential judgments upon guilty nations; and here especially those which were even then impending over Judea and Jerusalem, to fall within the life of that generation. The "great and notable day of the Lord" we may fitly refer to that most terrible day of her dread visitation to which Jesus so often referred, especially in Matt. 24, and its parallel passages.

In the face of such portents and overwhelming judgments, gleams of hope and promise break forth; "for whosoever shall call" humbly, penitently—"upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." An hour of possible salvation shortly precedes the dread day of doom! Oh, if men might only take first the warning, and then the offered blessing!

22. Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

23. Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

24. Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

The soul of Peter is mightily moved to earnest exhortation. As if fearing that the attention of his hearers is or may be averted, he appeals to them afresh.—"Men of Israel; I pray you hear my words!" These are things ye ought to know—ought to receive, heed and obey.—Jesus of Nazareth—ye have heard of him—a man whom God endorsed, bearing witness to his divine commission by manifold miracles before your eyes, as ye well know—that very man, delivered up of God in his providence to your control, ye have murdered on the cross! But, be it known to you, God has raised him from the dead!—"Approved of God among you," should rather be—*unto you*—God supplying this testimony to the Messiahship of Jesus, for yourselves to receive, and so be blessed, through faith in him.—"By

miracles, wonders and signs,"—these three words being not precisely synonymous, yet all concurring in the general sense of being attestations from God in behalf of his Son, indorsing his Sonship and his claim to be God's anointed. The first word signifies superhuman power; the second, things marvelous in their nature, adapted to excite attention and wonder; the third, their purpose as witnessing facts, proving his mission from God.—Noticeably, Peter appeals to their full knowledge of these miracles wrought by Jesus in their presence, and no man could gainsay him.

Jesus was "delivered" in the sense of being surrendered in the providence of God to their control. God *permitted* this result. Moreover, this was done with a full knowledge of the particular result of his being murdered by their hands. A necessity for this death, Jesus fully and repeatedly recognized and most distinctly taught (Luke 24: 26-46).—Really, without it, there had been no remission of sin, no salvation for perishing men. Yet though God's plan of redemption included this death on the cross, the human hands that perpetrated the deed were none the less "wicked." The Jew who demanded his crucifixion and the Roman who executed his will were none the less guilty. Personal freedom; abundant light sinned against; causeless malice; gratuitous insult—all conspired to make this murderous deed supremely guilty.

This man whose life ye took away, God has restored to life again.—"Loosed the pains," or better the *bands* of death—Death being personified as a personal agent, a despot, holding his subjects under bands. The Hebrew of the passage here referred to (Ps. 18: 5) means properly bands, yet by a slightly different vowel-pointing, may mean also pains—which meaning the Septuagint translators adopted. Peter took their word.

It was not possible that the Son of God should be permanently held under the power of death. The work before him demanded his victory over death and resurrection from the grave.

25. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:

26. Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:

27. Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

28. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

This prophecy written by David (Ps. 16: 8-11) Peter definitely applied to Jesus, the Messiah.—“Foresaw”—but not in the prophetic sense of foreknowing some future event; but rather, in the sense of seeing my Lord ever before me, very near, at my right hand ever ready for my help. The original Hebrew gives the causative sense;—I set or held my Lord constantly in my view; under my eye of faith as a present object.—Under this abiding sense of a present God as his helper, the speaker (here David speaking for his greater Son, the promised Messiah) declares—“Therefore did my heart exult in joy, and my tongue (the Hebrew meaning rather my noblest powers, the very *glory* of my being) speak forth in praise; and even my flesh (in death) shall repose in assured hope, because thou wilt not surrender me to Hades, conceived of as the personified Lord of the realm of the dead; neither (a parallel and therefore an expository clause) wilt thou permit thy Holy One to see corruption—in the grave.”—This prophecy of the Messiah Peter quotes as foreshowing the resurrection of Jesus before any physical corruption of his flesh in the grave. Paul (Acts 13: 35-37) cites the same prophecy to prove the same fact. These apostles would say—Your own Scriptures foreshadow the speedy resurrection of your nation’s promised Messiah. Therefore we adduce this fact of the resurrection of Jesus to confirm his claim to be verily the Messiah whose coming your people have been for ages awaiting.—In v. 27, the legitimate sense of the Hebrew is not precisely—leave my soul remaining *in* Sheol [Hades]—but—deliver over my soul [myself] to a Sheol, personified as holding the control of that world.

29. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

30. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

31. He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

32. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

This argument from prophecy, being of the utmost im-

portance to his audience, he expands and elaborates.—David (we all know) is himself dead and buried; his sepulchre is well known among us, and no one claims that *he* has risen from the dead. I may speak of him *freely* with no constraint, for what I say involves no disrespect to his memory. Being a prophet as ye all admit, and knowing that from his future offspring God would raise up one glorious Personage to sit on his throne, he spake (in Ps. 16 to which I have referred) of his resurrection.—The reference in v. 30 is to that primal prophecy and promise to David in 2 Sam. 7: 12–16 which is referred to again (Ps. 89: 3, 4 and 132: 11, 12). See my Notes on the passage in Samuel (“Heb. History,” pp. 187–193).—Having thus proved from prophecy the Messiah’s resurrection, he is prepared to assert that the fact is proved by the direct testimony of all the apostles as personal witnesses.

33. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

34. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

35. Until I make thy foes thy footstool.

36. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

In v. 33 it is probably better to read—Being exalted, not *by* the right hand, but *to* the right hand of God—to the place of high and equal honor on his throne—this fact being much more vital than the point as put in our English version. Either construction would express a truth. The construction—to God’s right hand—is the truth most in line with Peter’s present object, and is at least equally germane to the grammatical construction.

The effusion of the Spirit, the effects and proofs of which ye have before your eyes and ears, is at once a fact of the greatest moment in itself, and also an additional proof of the resurrection of Jesus and of his being exalted to supreme dominion.—Of this supreme dominion, take yet another prophetic testimony. David is not [in the same manner] ascended into the heavens, and therefore can not have said this concerning himself; yet David said, in that wonderful prophecy (Ps. 110: 1): “Jehovah said to that great personage whom I call ‘my Lord,’—Sit thou on my right

hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool." This prophecy, Jehovah—Supreme Lord of all—has now fulfilled, for He has exalted the lately crucified Jesus to his right hand and made him Lord in the sense of supreme dominion, and Christ, his own anointed Son.

Thus Peter proves to them that the despised Nazarene whom they had so lately and so wickedly crucified is now exalted to supreme dominion, to hold it till all his enemies, refusing to repent, shall be brought under his feet! What could be more appalling! A murdered man rising from his grave, and found to be on the awful throne of God, clothed with all power to crush every foe who will not submit to his righteous sway! And they knew him to be innocent of the charge upon which they condemned him to die, and of course knew that their crime could have no palliation.

37. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

38. Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

40. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

The power of the Spirit of God was in these results of pungent conviction for sin and immediate repentance; yet there was also pertinent truth in the words that Peter had spoken—truth of heart-searching and convicting power. It was truth which at once brought them up standing before the bar of conscience and under the awful eye of God—truth that brought forth their lately murdered victim, all suddenly, to their view, invested with dominion over his enemies which they were utterly powerless to withstand. How could they meet him and answer for their crime!—No wonder they cried out—"What shall we do?"—It was a hopeful indication that it was in their heart to accost the apostles as "brother-men." It indicated an attitude of mind already changed from haughty contempt to honest respect—not to say also, to a readiness to appeal to their sympathy and aid.

Peter has his answer ready—the vital point in it being put into the one word "*Repent.*" Ye have sinned; turn from that sin—from the whole spirit of it—to the new heart

and the new life of obedience to God. Condemn that sin and yourselves for committing it, and do works meet for repentance.

To be baptized in the name of Jesus unto the remission of their sins involved a professed acceptance of him as their Redeemer and allegiance to him as their Lord—the absolute coming over from the old life of sin to the new life of obedient, loving service to the Lord God and to his exalted Son. This done, they should receive the promised Holy Ghost. For that promise, carrying with it all gospel promise as well, was freely made to themselves and to their children also; nor was it limited to the ancient covenant people, but, broadly outspreading, reached the far off Gentiles, even all whom the Lord should call.

The words—"To your children"—should not be wrested from their natural, obvious application to their then living children, and construed to mean nothing more than their future descendants. Applied legitimately, they mean that the gospel promise—like the long antecedent covenant promise to God's people, included blessings upon their offspring, and not upon themselves to the exclusion of their children;—*i. e.*, "a God to thee and to thy seed after thee." Peter, himself a Jew, and addressing Jews, must be assumed to mean what God meant in the words of his covenant with Abraham—words embalmed forever in the heart of all pious Israelites.

With many other words of kindred character and spirit did he bear witness to the precious truth of God and to the then recent facts pertaining to Jesus; specially exhorting them by speedy repentance to save themselves from the tremendous doom soon to fall upon that most guilty and God-forsaken generation. The fearful judgments then impending over the guilty city were in Peter's thought, and served to point his appeal with pressing urgency.

The word "untoward," said of that generation, is expressive. The Greek word means *crooked*, awry, in accordance with the natural conception which thinks of integrity, uprightness as being straight—a life running along right lines; while wickedness is wayward, crooked, devious, perverse, distorted.

The English word "untoward"—the opposite of towardness—is averse and perverse—that which will not come toward the right; will not repent; and hence is forsaken and abandoned of God. Such were the mass of that last and

most guilty generation upon whom fell the crushing force of Heaven's righteous retribution!

41. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

42. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

44. And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45. And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

The first clause of v. 41 should read;—Those therefore (*i. e.*, the convicted and penitent men spoken of v. 37), having received his word, were baptized, and about three thousand were added to the Christian company. These continued steadfast under the teaching of the apostles, as men eager to hear more and more; also in the fellowship—the oneness of spirit and of life which characterized the whole body.—In “the breaking of bread,” all was in common, their daily meals being closed (it is supposed) with the administration of the supper. They were also constant in prayer.—The fear of God fell on all the people who had been cognizant of these manifestations of the Spirit's presence and power, and had heard Peter's discourse.

Under those circumstances, this community of goods was the right thing—the common necessities of the new converts; the extreme uncertainty of being able to hold their real estate at all and use its avails for Christ; combined with their spirit of mutual fellowship and love, to commend and even require this disposition of their fixed property. But it does not follow that this method would be wise and Christian under all possible circumstances or even under any other circumstances than these.

46. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

47. Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

The points made prominent are their joy of soul in this new Christian experience, their enjoyment of this peculiar mode of sharing their property in common to meet the common wants of the brotherhood; the simplicity of their Chris-

tian fellowship and mutual love; their worship and praise with overflowing soul, and the good impression which their manifest spirit made upon the people.

The Lord added to the church every day—not those who *should* be saved at some future time, but the *saved ones*—those who received the offered salvation of the gospel and were thereby saved from their sins. The Greek word is nothing but the participle—the *saved ones*—implying their actual reception of this gospel salvation.



CHAPTER III.

The pivotal point of this chapter is the healing of a man lame from birth. Being wrought very publicly in front of the temple, it attracted a crowd, to whom Peter preached Jesus Christ and repentance for salvation; enforcing his appeal by reference to the doctrine of the old Hebrew prophets.

1. Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

We may notice that John is associated with Peter, apparently for sympathy, counsel and mutual helpfulness, yet Peter is always the speaker. Never a word is reported from John.

The ninth hour—(three P. M.) was the time of the evening sacrifice, at which many resorted to the temple for their personal and in a sense private devotions.

At this stage of the Christian history, the apostles and their converts seem to have been frequently at the temple (2: 46)—the scribes and Pharisees not forbidding, or perhaps not being well able to prevent it. It was the common privilege of devout Jews, and Christian converts had not forfeited these privileges.

2. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

3. Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.

4. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.

5. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

6. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

7. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

8. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

9. And all the people saw him walking and praising God:

10. And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

11. And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

Every circumstance favored general notoriety and the best moral impression upon the people. This lame man must have been well known to hundreds, perhaps thousands of people who frequented the temple. The miracle was wrought in the presence of many; yet many more were drawn to the case by his exuberant joy in his restoration, by his following Peter and John, by his "walking, leaping and praising God" as if he could not repress his emotions under this strange experience of powers unknown before. All these circumstances combined to give Peter an occasion for another sermon to the gathered hundreds or thousands.

12. And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel. why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

13. The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go.

14. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;

15. And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.

16. And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

"Answered unto the people"—not in reply to formal questions, but in response to a well understood public feeling.—Why marvel ye at such a healing as this? Es-

pecially, why fix your gaze on us, apostles, as though we had made this man walk by virtue of our own extraordinary power or piety? As for ourselves, we utterly disclaim the power or the piety for such a result. But we will explain the case.

It indicated Peter's profound wisdom to put in the foreground of his reply, these words:—"The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob,—the God of our fathers"—for he is speaking to Jews who held these names in the highest honor.—This God of our honored fathers hath raised to highest glory his incarnated Son Jesus, the same whom ye delivered up to the Roman power, demanding his death. Peter fixes upon their persistent and virulent refusal to let Pilate release Jesus under the custom of having some one state prisoner released at this festival. They demanded that the murderer, Barabbas, should have this release, and denied it to Jesus, though Pilate was really in earnest to release him. These circumstances revealed the intense and appalling malignity of their hatred toward Jesus.

"Killed the Prince of Life" points their crime with the pungency of a telling antithesis:—Ye took life away from the Great Author and Giver of all life—from Him who came into this world as not only the Way and the Truth, but the *Life*. The original [*archegos*] is the same word which occurs in 5: 31, below; and also in Heb. 2: 10 and 12: 2—but translated variously, "Prince," "Captain"—*i. e.*, of our salvation; "Author"—*i. e.*, of our faith. In the present case it describes him as the Giver, not of all natural life only, but of all the better, nobler life of human souls unto salvation.—But though *ye* killed him, God at once raised him from the dead, and into a far higher power and glory than he had before.—Of this resurrection, we are this day before you as witnesses.

If any ask how this miracle of healing was wrought, this is our answer:—The name of this risen Jesus, manifested in and through faith in his name, has wrought it, even giving him this perfect soundness which is manifest before your very eyes. All is due to the risen glorified Jesus whom ye murdered on the cross!

17. And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.

18. But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

The nice point of interpretation here is to determine how far Peter meant to palliate their guilt on the score of ignorance. How much ignorance does he concede to them, and how much or little guilt does this ignorance itself (such as it was) involve?

We may answer, They did not know that Jesus of Nazareth was their nation's promised Messiah—the real Prince of Life—though they might have known it if they had been candid, honest, docile, frankly accepting the testimony which lay within their reach. Their ignorance, though deep, was yet in a vital sense guilty, but it did to a certain extent palliate their crime. So Jesus himself assumed in his prayer on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23: 34); and Paul recognizes this palliation as to himself (1 Tim. 1: 13)—"Obtaining mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief."—Peter's tone in these verses is conciliatory. The word "brethren" indicates this, as does the allusion to their ignorance, and perhaps also the reference to the divine purpose in permitting the death of his Son in accordance with foregoing prophecies. That God had great and most precious ends to answer by this death of his Son did not itself make their deed the less guilty, but it did suggest the hope of forgiveness. It bore within itself the blessed possibilities of pardon, and therefore naturally introduced his next thought—a call to repentance.

19. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

20. And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached, unto you:

21. Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

For both the reasons just previously assigned, viz., that their sin had some palliation in their ignorance; and that God's permission of the death of Jesus, had ends of mercy in view—Peter now exhorts them earnestly to repent, for there is hope of mercy for them if they will.—Repent and turn (better than "be converted," for the verb is in form transitive, not passive)—imploring them to act rather than to be acted upon.—"That your sins may be blotted out"—supposes them to be on record, but that this record is effaced, wiped out, in case of their forgiveness.—The word "when," in the clause—"When the times of refresh-

ing shall come" is not only wrong in sense, but particularly infelicitous, because it postpones to a remote and unknown future the time of their forgiveness. Nothing could be further from Peter's thought than the idea that their forgiveness must wait till those "times of refreshing" should come, and the Lord should send Jesus again from heaven.—The translation should be—*In order* that times of refreshing might come to their souls—*i. e.*, that they might receive the blessings expressed in this phrase—"times of refreshing;" that these times might come to their souls personally.—The Greek word for "refreshing" suggests primarily either taking breath after exhaustion, or the grateful sense of coolness and invigoration after being overheated. Here it may refer either to the present joy of the young convert under the manifested presence and favor of the Lord, or to the blessed times when such joy shall be the universal experience of God's people—these times, though remote, being notwithstanding a very fit and strong motive for repentance. This latter sense is favored by the close connection of the coming of these "times" with the Lord's "sending Jesus Christ."—The textual reading which is translated "before preached," is superseded, on high authority, by a verb meaning—before appointed.

"Whom heaven" [not "the heavens"] "must receive" (*i. e.*, *must* under the necessity created by the divine plan)—until the great redemptive work to be wrought for our race shall have been achieved under the gospel dispensation. So long Jesus must needs remain in heaven, wielding "all power in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28: 18) for the accomplishment of these great results.—The Greek word for "restitution" is kindred with the verb used in the disciple's question (Acts 1: 6); "Wilt thou at this time *restore again* the kingdom to Israel?"—In this word "restitution," however, the carnal, worldly element is far less prominent than in that earlier question about the kingdom promised (supposably) to Israel. Here Peter's thought runs along the line of the ancient prophecies of Zion's prosperity and of the Redeemer's triumphs as given in all the old prophets from earliest times. He certainly supposes that Jesus will not come again from heaven in visible person till those glorious prophecies of the world's redemption and conversion to his scepter shall have been accomplished.

Some interpreters make great account of this passage as proving that Peter thought of these times of refreshing and

Christ's personal coming with these "times of restitution," as being then very near at hand. Yet Peter does not say they are near—does not even say any thing that implies or assumes it. On the contrary, he certainly declares that all the great achievements of the world's Messiah, foretold by the prophets, must be wrought first; *i. e.*, while yet Heaven retains Jesus on his mediatorial throne, energizing all the agencies of his gospel kingdom for the world's conversion.

In respect to the pertinence and force of these considerations as motives to persuade Peter's hearers to repent, all is plain. The kingdom of Jesus is a great fact. He is exalted at God's right hand in all power; he has the blessing of gospel refreshings for all penitent souls; he sees sublime victories over the nations of the wide world in God's predicted plan and in certain progress toward accomplishment;—therefore, bow ye to his scepter; become willing subjects of his kingdom; open your souls to the joyous reception of these gifts of God's everlasting mercy to our race.

Yet another perversion of this passage would fain force these words—"times of restitution"—to teach the doctrine of the ultimate restoration of all moral beings to holiness.—It is a sufficient refutation of this forced perversion that Peter limits this restitution to precisely the things predicted by all the old prophets. But they never taught the final restoration of lost souls.

The importance of this passage (made doubly important by its manifold misconstructions)—will justify me in quoting here a few well put words from H. B. Hackett—(commentary on this passage.)

"Nearly all critics understand this passage (v. 20) as referring to the return of Christ at the end of the world. The similarity of the language to that of other passages which announce that event demands this interpretation. The apostle enforces his exhortation to repent by an appeal to the final coming of Christ, not because he would represent it as near in point of time, but because that event was *always near to the feelings and consciousness* of the first believers. It was the great consummation on which the strongest desires of their souls were fixed, to which their thoughts and hopes were habitually turned. They lived in expectation of it; they labored to be prepared for it; in the expressive language of Peter, they were constantly '*looking for and hastening unto it.*'"

The following passages are cited to illustrate the moral use

made of the Lord's final coming to warn sinners unto repentance;—(Acts 30, 31—1 Tim. 6: 13—2 Tim. 4: 8—2 Peter 3: 11)—upon which he proceeds to say:—"Some have ascribed the frequency of such passages to a definite expectation on the part of the apostles that the personal advent of Christ was nigh at hand; but such a view is not only unnecessary, in order to account for such references to 'the day of the Lord,' but is at variance with 2 Thess. 2: 2. Paul there declares that this expectation was unfounded, and that he himself neither held nor taught it. But while he corrects the mistake of those Thessalonian brethren as to the very near return of the Lord, neither he nor any other inspired writer has informed us how remote that event may be, or when it will take place. This point remains not revealed; the New Testament leaves it in a state of uncertainty."

22. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

23. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

24. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

25. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

26. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

The passage from Moses is in Deut. 18: 15, 18, 19,—a prophecy concerning the Messiah as in some salient points a second Moses, through whom God spake to men with supreme authority.

The reference to Samuel we may suppose is due, not so much to any prophecies spoken by him personally as to his being the father and founder of the great school of prophets in which a succession of them were trained for Israel.

In v. 25, the turn given by Peter is tenderly conciliating and persuasive. The people addressed were the children of those old prophets and heirs of that precious covenant first made with Abraham, which enured to all his seed—if so they would.—And now, having raised up his Son Jesus,

God tenderly gave them the first offers of his mercy, sending Jesus (so to speak) in the person of his apostles to bear his own message through their lips, in order to bless them in turning them individually from their iniquities. It was not in their national but in their individual capacity that this fresh salvation through a crucified Redeemer was to be appropriated and realized.



CHAPTER IV.

This is the sequel of the chapter preceding, showing how Peter and John were arrested in the midst of his discourse and thrown into prison (vs. 1-4); were brought before the Sanhedrim and questioned by what power they had wrought the healing of the lame man (vs. 5-8); how they answered (vs. 8-10); and preached Jesus as the headstone of the corner in whom only could there be salvation (vs. 11, 12); how the council were confounded (vs. 13, 14); and after private consultation, concluded to forbid them to preach Jesus any more (vs. 15-18); how the two apostles replied (vs. 19, 20); and were further threatened, and then dismissed (vs. 21, 22); their report to their Christian brethren and the prayer then offered (vs. 23-30); the new baptism of the Spirit and another sketch of the Christian life of the brotherhood (vs. 31-37).

1. And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them,

2. Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

3. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold until the next day: for it was now eventide.

4. Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

While they were yet speaking, this rude and violent arrest is made—the party making it being the priests then on duty at the temple; their commanding officer and certain leading Sadducees. Noticeably the latter appear but rarely during the gospel history, as in active hostility against Jesus; but after his ascension, they become much more prominent—obviously for the reason that the apostles con-

tinually put forward the fact of Christ's resurrection—a standing offense and annoyance to the Sadducees. In almost every point the Sadducee differed from the Pharisee;—in some, to the extent of contrast. His fraternity were at once a religious sect and a political party. Less numerous than the Pharisees, they had more wealth; and, apart from religious considerations, more social position—which served in a measure to bring up their influence more nearly to a level with that of the Pharisees. They were fully represented in the Sanhedrim. Religiously, they were lax in doctrine; made small account of the traditions and even of the Mosaic law; were materialists, denying the resurrection and even the existence of either angel or spirit. It was on these latter points that their principles brought them into sharp antagonism with the Christian community.

In v. 4 the historian interposes the remark that this sermon, thus rudely broken off, had been of great power, swelling the number of converts to five thousand.

5. And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes,

6. And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

7. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?

Here is a full meeting of the great Jewish Council, the high priest presiding, with a strong representation of his relatives and personal friends. Placing these two humble Galileans in the midst of their august assembly as if hoping to overawe and oppress them with the weight of their dignity, they demanded by what power, or in what name, they had wrought the healing of the man lame from his birth?—The alternative—"By what name?" signified—If not by your own power, then by *whose*? Was it done by your own personal power, or by the power of some one else? They had probably heard some intimation of "another name," bearing upon the case.

8. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people and elders of Israel,

9. If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole:

10. Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye cruci-

fied, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this **man** stand here before you whole.

The words—"filled with the Holy Ghost"—imply a special effusion of the Spirit to meet this occasion, in fulfillment of Christ's repeated promise that when brought before magistrates and councils they need fear nothing; need not even premeditate their defense—for it should be given them in that hour by the Holy Ghost (Matt. 10: 17-20).—Peter has his answer ready and makes his great points very emphatic—We have but one answer:—the *name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*—the same man whom ye crucified, and whom God has raised from the dead. It is the power of his name which has brought this long-time powerless man here before you, made whole. You have the evidence of his divine power here before your eyes—God's own witness to his resurrection, and also to his being exalted to supreme dominion in the heavens.—Know ye this, and let all Israel know!

11. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

12. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

This allusion to the prophecy about the "corner-stone" (Ps. 118: 22) seems to be made here in this very brief way because they were supposed to be familiar with it. Perhaps Peter assumed that they must remember to have heard it more than once from the lips of Jesus himself, as in Luke 20: 17 and Matt. 21: 42.—No prophecy could well be more pertinent and forcible for the present case than this. Taken from a psalm composed probably for the great corner-stone laying of the second temple, built under Zerubbabel, it had a natural bearing upon the nation's Messiah, on the principle that the old temple—the visible abode of the divine glory—foreshadowed the temple of Christ's body in which this divine glory became chrystallized in a far more real sense.—The builders rejected this chief corner-stone; but God honored and glorified it as the real foundation of the whole august spiritual temple.—This line of imagery appears with slight modifications in several passages in the epistles (*e. g.*, Rom. 9: 33 and Eph. 2: 20 and 1 Peter 2: 6, 7).

This was the fit time and place to say (v. 12) that this

Jesus is the only Savior for lost men. There is salvation in no other.—In the clause—“*must* be saved”—the Greek word (*dei*) implies an absolute necessity—here in the special sense of a necessity made absolute by the sovereign appointment of God, who had approved this one Savior and never any other; so that sinners absolutely must be saved by this or by none.

13. Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

14. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

The cool self-possession and the fearlessness of these men amazed them. Did they remember how Peter quailed before them when Jesus was first put on trial in their court? This Peter is now entirely another man in his spirit; as marked for boldness as then for timidity—of which the only explanation is that now he is “filled with the Holy Ghost.”—“Unlearned” would be better read *unlettered*—not men of books—not of the educated class.—The word “ignorant” misleads the English reader if he takes it in its usual sense—men of little knowledge. It means only men from the common walks of life: average men; men not belonging to the educated circle.—Observing these traits of their educational character, they were the more surprised at the force of Peter’s words and the power of his logic. Observing them more closely, they remembered to have seen them with Jesus during his life and ministry. Coupling with all these points the presence of this healed cripple, mightily indorsing their credentials as men owned and sent of God, they had not another word to say.

15. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

16. Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we can not deny it.

17. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

18. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

In this private consultation they had to deal with the fact that this miracle was too well known to be ignored or dis-

regarded, and too well certified to be denied. What, then, could they do save to stop the apostles preaching—if their authority would avail to stop it.—So they call them back and solemnly command them to cease from speaking at all or teaching in the name of Jesus.—Notice that (in v. 17) the thing they would fain stop from spreading further among the people was not so much the fame of the miracle as the new doctrine which the miracle, with the preaching, served to sustain.

19. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

20. For we can not but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

This reply is simply perfect, lacking no possible element of pertinence, pungency, force. With most admirable skill it throws the great question back upon their own moral sense.—*Judge ye* whether we ought to hearken unto you more than to God—which means virtually—to you and *not* to God; to you when your commands upon us conflict with God's. Nor does even this measure the full moral force of this terse appeal. The apostles carry up the decision upon what is right, from their tribunal to God's—whether it be right *in the view of God*—right as weighed before him and by him—to obey you more than God;—on this point what think ye? What do ye honestly believe to be right in God's view of the case? For, as for ourselves, we can not possibly do otherwise than to speak out what we have seen and heard.—There you have our decision, you know what we shall do!—You will see that the question is, not what may seem right in your notion of the matter; but what is right in the sight of God. It is of small concern to us to stand right before men—before even magistrates and councils;—but to be right before God is our supreme concern. Judge ye whether this be not in itself supremely right!—Thus, with the grandest moral sublimity, they appeal the whole case from the human tribunal to the divine.—Viewed in its moral aspects, these two humble Galileans move with the tread of giants! Their words, morally weighed, have the force of thunderbolts! Neither the wily sophistry nor the self-assumed dignity of priest or of Sadducee can stand at all before them.

21. So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.

22. For the man was above forty years old on whom this miracle of healing was showed.

Apparently this Court would have punished them, despite of their innocence and even against their own moral convictions, if only they had dared; but there was a public sentiment which even they could not despise or disregard. It was not wise for them to outrage this public sentiment (as they must have done) by inflicting punishment for working this miracle of healing, or even for declaring that they had done it in the name and by the power of the risen Jesus of Nazareth.—The fact that the man was more than forty years of age had made his healing both certainly miraculous and also entirely indisputable.

23. And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

24. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

25. Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

26. The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together.

28. For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

29. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word.

30. By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

The case being reported to the whole fraternity moves them mightily to prayer. Whither should men go under such pressure, but to God?—Under these circumstances it was beautifully pertinent to address God as the Lord Jehovah, the very God who built the heavens and the earth and who must therefore wield all power throughout the universe.—The case suggested that prophecy of David (Psalms 2: 1) which rebukes the puny rage and the vain resistance of human kings and rulers against God's own anointed One, exalted to be King and Lord of all. They find the points made in that prophecy most wonderfully fulfilled in the confederation of Roman governors with both Gentiles and Jews against God's Holy Child Jesus, purposing to take advantage

of his incarnation in human flesh, not to say, of the temporary weakness of human childhood.—In v. 27, applying that prophecy to these recent facts, the older manuscript authorities introduce the words—“in this city:”—For of a truth in this very city—against thy holy child Jesus has this organized confederation been made, etc.—But they only accomplished God’s sovereign counsel, bringing about the result of his sacrificial death and of his consequent exaltation to the throne of the universe, clothed with infinite resources of power to crush every foe as well as to save all penitent believing souls unto eternal salvation.

It was sufficient to pray that God would *look upon* their threatenings. Certainly *He* would know what to do in the case. Did they notice that David’s tone in that Psalm is one of the loftiest assurance in God’s consciously omnipotent resources for retribution?—“He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision”—their wicked wrath and their puny arm being only contemptible for their weakness.

The first real petition in this prayer was for “*boldness*”—that every man might stand up, fearless of all peril and speak for Christ in the face of the fiercest persecution. They pray also that yet more miracles (should God please) might be wrought in that potent name of Jesus.

31. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

A second pentecostal manifestation of the Spirit’s descent bears witness that God has heard their prayer. The place is shaken as before; again, God’s Spirit is there! All are filled yet again with the Holy Ghost, and their prayer for boldness in speaking the Gospel Word is heard and answered.

32. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

33. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all.

34. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35. And laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

36. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation, a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

37. Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

These brief sketches of the ruling spirit of the Christian brotherhood are exceedingly precious facts in this history—in place here, as also at the close of Chapter II. The most striking manifestations were—the perfect oneness of heart and soul; the common and freest possible distribution of their property to meet the real wants of those who had lost all by espousing Christ; the great spiritual power which accompanied the Apostles' testimony to the resurrection of Jesus; and the great grace which came upon them all. Nobody lacked bread, for the holders of real estate freely sold it, and committed the avails to the apostles for distribution to the needy.

The case of Barnabas is adduced here by anticipation; his future history bringing him prominently into this great gospel work—as we shall see.

The name Barnabas, according to its etymology, signifies rather son of *exhortation* than son of “consolation”—*i. e.*, an exhorter. This follows the primary, not the secondary sense of the Greek word and also of the Aramaic; and is in the nature of the case much more probable. This man became Paul's fellow missionary.



CHAPTER V.

Deception of Ananias and Sapphira and their death (vs. 1–11); miracles and their results (vs. 12–16); apostles arrested by the Jewish authorities, but released from prison by an angel, and commanded to resume their preaching in the temple (vs. 17–21); the officers, learning the facts are greatly troubled (vs. 22–26); arraign the apostles again and rebuke them (vs. 27–28); Peter's defense (vs. 29–32); through the counsel of Gamaliel, the council simply command them to desist from preaching Jesus (vs. 33–40); their joy under persecution, and their continued preaching of Christ Jesus (vs. 41–42).

1. But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

2. And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

3. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

4. Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

5. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost; and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

6. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

Ananias acted in concert with his wife, she being equally responsible for the crime. The sin consisted in professing to pay over the whole receipts and yet retaining a part. Luke's words imply that they retained the greater part, paying over only the smaller part to the apostles.—Noticeably Peter assumes that Satan's hand was in this wickedness. Remembering that Judas was instigated by this same Satan, and that his own perilous fall was attributed by his Master to Satan's desire to have him, he had authority for referring such a sin to Satan's machinations. But it was not in his theology or his metaphysics that Satan's hand bore all the moral responsibility, and left his victim Ananias innocent. Far from it. The real meaning of his question (v. 3) is, Why did you *suffer* Satan to fill your heart with this scheme and thus lie to the Holy Ghost—keep back part of the price, and yet declare that ye brought it all in? Ye knew very well, that while ye still held the land it was your own, and ye were not required to sell it, and sold only because ye chose to do so; and after ye had sold, it was still at your option to keep the money, or to bring it into our common fund; so that this whole scheme was of your own devising to get the honor of devoting all to God while yet ye kept back most of it for yourselves. This was lying, not to men only or chiefly, but to God.

We notice that in terms Peter calls this sin, first, a "lying to the Holy Ghost" (v. 3); and next (v. 4), "lying unto God." Inasmuch as the same act is referred to in each case, this lying to the Holy Ghost is assumed to be in fact lying unto God, and these two names are convertible, one meaning essentially the same as the other; that is, in his view, lying against the Holy Ghost is lying against God.

We must ask—In what sense was this sin a lie against the Holy Ghost? and answer:—It was a lie to men filled with the Holy Ghost—taught by the Holy Ghost—and thus it became virtually a lie to the Holy Ghost himself.—Ye thought (Peter would say) that God would not see your lie. Ye flattered yourselves that God, the Spirit, was not in and with his apostles to such an extent as to reveal to them your falsehood and blasphemy.

The great God will always hold in honor his Spirit sent down to dwell in human hearts, and therefore must avenge with exemplary punishment every insult offered him, and not least the insult of a *lie*, which assumes that He has neither the discernment to see it, nor the purity to abhor it if it were to come to his knowledge.

In the earlier stages of this gospel enterprise, some degree of honor attached to the wealthy who cheerfully sold their estates and brought in the avails for the aid of the needy. Hence arose this temptation before which Ananias and Sapphira fell. It became specially important to head off this temptation in the outset, else the Christian communion might soon have become as corrupt, as full of pride and hypocrisy as the Pharisees themselves, whom Jesus so severely denounced.

7. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

8. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? and she said, Yea, for so much.

9. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

10. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

11. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

His wife repeats the sin, and suffers the same doom.—Peter uses a new phrase to describe their sin—“*tempt the Spirit of the Lord.*” It was an effort to conceal their act from his all-seeing eye—to prove him, whether he would find out their sin, and would punish it.

We need not assume that Peter himself wielded the miraculous power which took these lives. The sudden death of Ananias may have been a surprise to him. God only was

responsible for it. It would be a great mistake to charge it against Peter as either intolerance or vindictiveness.—The result of these sudden, awful deaths was a wholesome moral fear—*i. e.*, of such a sin and of such a fate.—“To give up the ghost”—literally, to give up the breath—follows the ancient classic conception of death as the breathing out of one’s life with the last breath. “Ghost” is the old Saxon for spirit, and primarily for wind and for breath.

12. And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch.

13. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

14. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women)

15. Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

16. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

“The rest”—remaining ones—not of the people at large, but of the same class with Ananias. No more *such* men attempted to join them, under such false pretenses. Luke can not mean that no more real converts came to them, for he proceeds to say that such came the more freely. This appalling scene helped forward and by no means hindered their spiritual work.—Miracles of healing also became more frequent. With great faith even in Peter’s shadow they brought their sick into the streets where he was to pass, and with results according to their faith,—faith in the name of Jesus being the vital condition of cure. Their coming in from adjacent cities testifies to the wide-spreading fame of these miracles.

17. Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation.

18. And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

19. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

20. Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

Apparently, not Peter and John only, but the whole body of the twelve at least were arrested. Again the Sadducees

are prominent in the persecution—outraged because their doctrine of the resurrection was in peril.

Angelic agency supplies the superhuman power requisite for emergencies. We know not how often nor under what laws of motion they come and operate. Their hand is here opening these prison doors, bringing the apostles forth, and then closing the doors with no alarm to the keepers. Nothing is made more clear in the scriptures than that they have physical force to act upon matter—to roll away the great stone from the sepulcher (Matt. 28: 2)—to bring forth Peter on another occasion from his prison, causing his manacles to drop suddenly from his hands; making the huge iron gate that opened into the city give way as “of its own accord” (Acts 12: 6–10).—On this occasion they direct the apostles to repair to the temple and resume their appropriate work, fearless of the wrath or the power of their persecutors.—Beautifully they describe the gospel message as “the words of this life.” Words they were indeed which brought the glorious life of salvation to men dead in their sins. The angel knew to his joy the blessedness of that *life*, and felt an interest inexpressibly deep in having those words of life preached to the lost that they might be saved.—We are left to conceive, as best we may, how gladly this angel fulfilled his mission of deliverance to those imprisoned messengers and preachers of this gospel life.

21. And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

22. But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told,

23. Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within.

Promptly obedient to the angelic word, they are ready at the temple in the early morning to speak again to the gathering multitudes. A fresh zest there must have been in this message after a night of such experiences.

In due time the council convene, their numbers apparently increased by inviting a body of aged men—the word “senate,” (Greek) meaning a body of old men. Officers are dispatched to bring in the prisoners;—but lo, they report the doors all right and the keepers too,—but no prison-

ers there!—This strange case may (supposably) have had some influence upon the mind of Gamaliel toward the caution and the wisdom which he soon manifested.

24. Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

25. Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

26. Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

27. And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,

28. Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

The doubt expressed in the words—"whereunto this would grow"—is not precisely what the thing *is*, but rather, what would, or might *come of it*—what would be the result if no prison-walls could hold these apostles—if some power was on their side which in this strange way confounded all their plans and expectations, they might find they had in hand a more serious undertaking than they had thought.

Nor was the case relieved when a messenger came in from the temple reporting that those men were there preaching again!—Prudently the officers bring them this time without violence, for they know well that the people are profoundly impressed with a sense that these are men of God, preaching and working with the might of God in and behind them. Those people, once aroused to indignation, might stone them. Such outbursts of violence were not unknown to that period of Jewish history. The readers of the gospels will have noticed that stoning was not only a Jewish mode of capital punishment under their law, but a form of executing mob-law by an enraged populace. (See John 8: 5 and 10: 31-33 and 11: 8; also Acts 7: 58, 59 and 14: 19).—Instead of violence which under these circumstances they dared not resort to, they content themselves with an effort to overawe them with their official authority. Did we not *command* you, even with all the force of our official authority, that ye should not teach in this name of Jesus at all? But now, see what ye have done!—filled the whole city with your preaching! They do not say—converted the

whole city to your doctrine; but ye have been preaching these many days to masses of listening people! And yet more, ye really desire [ye will and purpose to do it if ye can]—to make us responsible for the blood of Jesus of Nazareth!—Had they forgotten their own imprecation before Pilate:—"His blood be on us and on our children!" (Matt. 27: 25). If there is responsibility to be borne for the shedding of his blood as of an innocent man, we stand ready to meet and to bear it!—Now, however, it seems a more serious matter. If the people should come to believe that Jesus was murdered in innocence at their malicious instigation, they might find a very grave account to be settled at the bar of their own people.

29. Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

30. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

31. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

32. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

Peter is again the speaker; all the apostles are said [Gr.] to speak. He spake for them all. The answer is prompt and very explicit.—We recognize God's authority—not yours. It is simply a stern necessity [dei] that we obey him—not you. In this case, Peter does not (as before, Acts 4: 19, 20), put it to their conscience and moral sense to say whether this must not be right in God's sight. The simplest and briefest possible way of putting it is now sufficient. We have but one Master to obey—not yourselves, but God.

To say—"The God of our fathers"—was purposely conciliatory—both in respect to "our"—we being Jews as well as yourselves; and in holding them to be the children of the ancient covenant and promises under which the Messiah came.—He raised Jesus from the dead when ye had taken his life by crucifixion. "Hanging him on a tree" is literally, *upon wood*—i. e., a wooden pillar—not a green and growing tree.—Here again, with no sense of fear, Peter charges upon them the deliberate, causeless, guilty murder of Jesus. Him hath God exalted *to his right hand*; and possibly in the involved sense also—by and with his own almighty power—the same words as above (2: 33).—"To be a Prince" (the same word as in 3: 15) ("killed the

Prince of life"). Probably in this connection, his princely dominion looks specially to his being at the head of God's great scheme of redemption—the Author and Finisher of all gospel faith, for it is linked with the word "Savior" and declared to be an exaltation for the purpose of giving repentance and remission. So construed, the statement contemplates the first stage of Christ's mediatorial work, while the agencies of the Spirit and of mercy are put forth for the salvation of men, and not the ultimate stage in which his supreme dominion will call rebels to account and wield the agencies of righteous retribution.

The precise sense in which he "*gives* repentance," while yet repentance is and must be the free act of the sinner, should have our attention. The most obvious and satisfactory explanation assumes a special reference to the promised gift of the Holy Ghost—a fact and power constantly present to the thought of Peter in all these discourses—a fact which fully and even specially includes that divine agency which leads, draws sinners to repentance. This agency never conflicts with the sinner's own agency; never supersedes it; but only moves, inspires, directs it; and is therefore, in its nature *moral* only and purely—always, therefore, in harmony with the free moral nature of man.

With Gospel repentance comes forgiveness—which Jesus will surely bestow on every truly penitent soul.

In this short speech, the logic runs thus: The very same Jesus of Nazareth, whom ye so guiltily murdered, God has exalted to his right hand to administer the glorious agencies and powers of salvation, to move the hearts of sinners to repent and so obtain forgiveness.—Brethren of Israel, guilty as ye are, there is hope for you in this slain but risen Jesus! He himself opens to you the door of mercy—even to every one who falls penitently at his feet.

"We are witnesses of these *words*"—more exact than "*things*"—for the matters of which he speaks are of the sort that come from God to men in words—words of promise—words revealing God's great thoughts of mercy toward lost men.—The apostles are witnesses—but not they only. The Holy Ghost is a witness jointly with them, sustaining their testimony by his own—his testimony being given in all those special manifestations peculiar to those times—the gift of tongues, the working of miracles, and the marvelous wisdom and the fearless energy with which He filled the

souls of his servants—all that obey him—the same verb for “obey” and in the same sense as in v. 29.

33. When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.

34. Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;

35. And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

36. For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered and brought to nought.

37. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

38. And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

39. But if it be of God, ye can not overthrow it: lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

40. And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

The effect of this speech was sharp. The word (“cut to the heart”) means sawn through and through, as if the tearing teeth of a saw were severing their heart-strings asunder. Not that the speech was insulting or purposely exasperating; but its pungent truths fell on proud, tough, unyielding souls, having never a thought of coming down in penitence, or even of giving place at all to reason.—Their first thought is to plot for putting the apostles to death at once. If only they could contrive some scheme of violence which would elude the interposition of the people for their rescue, they were ready.

But suddenly—perhaps unexpectedly to all—there arose one man in their council, manifestly one of its members—probably one whose voice had not been heard there on these questions before—yet a man venerable for years and for wisdom—a Pharisee [the active, violent members were mostly Sadducees]—a man apparently the leader of all the moderate, discreet men of the council—by the name of Gamaliel. He was a doctor—professor of Jewish law, well known, and profoundly esteemed among all the people. He rose and moved that the men at the bar of the council be withdrawn

for a short time [better than “a little space”], that the council might have opportunity for free consultation.—There is no reason to question that this is the same Gamaliel at whose feet Saul of Tarsus had sat as a pupil—a grandson of the renowned Hillel who founded one of the two rival schools of Jewish learning; a man whose name and fame are great in the Talmud; “whose renown for wisdom and moderation was such that his death is represented in the Jewish books as the departure of true Pharisaism from Israel” (Alexander).—His first words have the ring of sound sense and deep wisdom:—Be careful, for your own sakes, as to what ye shall do to these men. Ye may find it a matter of deeper concern to yourselves than ye suppose. For if God should be on their side and not on yours, *what then?*

He next calls their attention to two insurrections, then recent in Jewish history, in which men arose and drew many followers, but soon perished miserably, dragging down with themselves more or less of their followers, and leaving the rest to be scattered disastrously. From their case he reasonably infers that if these apostles have no other basis but such as those insurgents had, they will come to nought full soon of themselves. They would only need to be let alone. But if it should prove that their work is of God, it would be vain for the council to oppose it—nay, more; far worse than in vain; for let them consider—What if they were found fighting against God?

For once these words of moderation and wisdom ruled the hour. The council yielded; recalled the apostles to discharge them; but first, to vent their malice, and perhaps in their thought, to atone somewhat for this concession to moderate measures, they beat them, and then repeat their futile injunction to speak no more in the name of Jesus, and let them go. [Was Saul of Tarsus there? and if so, what did he think of the counsels of his old professor, Gamaliel?]

41. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Was the spirit of those apostles subdued, awed, and moved to succumb? Never! It was their joy to have the honor of suffering for Jesus. Glad were they to be accounted worthy to suffer shame for his name. Now they remember

to purpose the Master's words—"Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father and before his angels."

Remarkably, the scourging seems to have been scarcely noticed. It served (we may suppose) to heighten their joy, supplying (as in the case of Paul and Silas, Acts 16: 25,) some new notes in their song of praise to God.

Again, they are preaching daily in the temple, openly defying all the authority of the council; and also in every house over all the city where they would and could, ceasing not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ. So utterly do the persecution and dictation of the Jewish council fail to arrest the triumphant progress of this gospel work.



CHAPTER VI.

This chapter has a twofold purpose, viz., to record the appointment of the first body of deacons (vs. 1-6), and to introduce Stephen, distinguished for his wisdom and boldness; for his great speech which fills the next chapter, and for his martyrdom—the first man of the apostolic age whose life became a sacrifice to the malice of Jewish persecution (vs. 7-15).

1. And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

2. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

3. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

These "Grecians" were Hellenists, not Hellenes; *i. e.*, were not Grecians by birth and nationality, but only in language and foreign residence, being Jews who had resided abroad; had adopted the Greek tongue; and so had become a class distinct from the Jews of Palestine who used the Aramean tongue. At this early day, no converts had been made from people who were Gentiles by birth.

Widows—usually a dependent class—were at this time supplied with food from the charity fund of the Christian brotherhood. Complaint arose, whether well or ill founded, that the Hellenist widows were overlooked (so the word seems to mean), or at least, received less attention than the Hebrew widows.—In the spirit of justice as well as of benevolence, the apostles gave these complaints their prompt attention.—The numbers to be looked after were great and the business burdensome. Hence they said:—It is not pleasing to us—does not seem well—that we should neglect the preaching of the word and give our service to matters of the table.—“Men of honest report”—in good reputation for honesty and integrity; and also full of the spirit of wisdom.—That we may put them in charge of this necessary service—literally—of this *need* or demand—*i. e.*, for service. Then we shall be left free to devote ourselves exclusively to prayer and to preaching—*i. e.*, to the public services which consisted in prayer and in preaching the word.—This was eminently sensible. The case shows that these deacons were originally assigned to the special service of supervising the temporalities of the church—to the care and distribution of its provisions for the poor. In practice, however, it appears that at least two of these seven, Stephen and Philip, were very active and efficient as evangelists, preaching the gospel with extraordinary spirit and success.

The reason for the number seven is not given, yet very probably is traceable to the sacred associations with that number, consequent upon its relations to the Sabbath. No other explanation is more probable than this.

5. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

6. Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

7. And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

These names are all Greek, not Hebrew—a circumstance which makes it probable that they were Hellenists—of the class among whom complaints had arisen. If so, the voice of the people making the selection was—We entrust this responsibility entirely to yourselves. Ye will do justice to

the Hebrew widows, and ye will not fall under suspicion of neglecting the Grecians. So with prayer and imposition of hands, they are set apart to this service.

This slight disturbance of feeling having been thus wisely and kindly allayed, and the whole business judiciously adjusted, there seems to have been a new baptism of blessings and a fresh impulse in their work. Wicked as that great city was, the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly. More surprising still, "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." Luke does not say—of the Pharisees, or Sadducees, or even, of scribes or lawyers—although some from these classes may have been among the converts. But the priests were a numerous class, amounting to several thousands.—The conversion of a considerable number of this class doubtless brought into the Christian brotherhood a large accession of leading minds, at least somewhat educated, and thus augmented the working forces of the church.

8. And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

9. Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

10. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

Stephen comes into special prominence, distinguished for great faith and power and for performing extraordinary miracles.

Very important for its results was this discussion which arose between Stephen and certain men of the synagogue of the Libertini, and also others—some from Cyrene and from Alexandria; others from Cilicia or Asia. These Libertini (not "libertines" in the modern sense) are supposed to have been freedmen, originally Jewish slaves under Roman masters, but now freed and residing in such numbers in Jerusalem as to have a synagogue of their own. Cyrene was a port-town and Greek colony in northern Africa; Alexandria, a great and well known city of Egypt, of large Jewish population; Cilicia, the south-east province of Asia Minor; and "Asia" in the then restricted sense—one of the provinces of Asia Minor. Supposably these men were of the Hellenist class, and for this reason came naturally into contact with Stephen.

In this discussion they were thoroughly worsted, and consequently became furious in their malign hostility.

11. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.

12. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council.

13. And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law :

14. For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered to us.

15. And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

“Suborned” in the sense of inducing them to bear false testimony. The whole movement had the spirit of mob violence, with only the poorest apology of forms of law; worked by perjured testimony and distorted evidence.—The charge in v. 14 may have had some truth to start from, for Jesus had foretold the destruction of the holy city.—As to changing the customs which came down from Moses, Stephen probably did teach that the Christian scheme would lead to some modifications of Judaism. Few and moderate words in that direction might be distorted and abused to exasperate men, bigoted and tenacious of the mere rituals of their system as most Jews then were.

“His face as that of an angel” suggests a glowing radiance of purity and benevolence. Perhaps like that which appeared in Moses (Ex. 34: 29–35) when he came down from communion with a present God on the holy mount.



CHAPTER VII.

This chapter records the great speech of Stephen before the Jewish council when arraigned on the charges (6: 13, 14) of having spoken “blasphemous words against Jerusalem and the law”—particularly that “Jesus would destroy this place and change the customs that had come down from Moses.”

His speech takes a wide range in Hebrew history, bringing out prominently the names and deeds of Abraham, Joseph, Moses,—to David and Solomon. Then, instead of giving his speech the turn and the tone of a personal defense against the indictment, he fearlessly arraigns the proud, dignified council before him as guilty of all the great sins of their fathers; as “stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears,” and as “always resisting the Holy Ghost.” The Council, though sitting as a court of justice, were infuriated to madness. Reckless of all forms of law they became an immense mob—dragged their prisoner out of the city and stoned him to death.

Preliminary to the consideration of Stephen’s speech in detail, it will be well to premise certain general views of his design.

1. Negatively; he did not propose to give the council lessons in Hebrew history as he would instruct men unfamiliar with that subject.

2. But, positively; assuming that the members of that council were familiar with at least the salient points of that history, he calls their attention to the fact that their fathers *were the chosen people of God*, having in trust a special covenant, glorious promises, inspiring prophecy of a Deliverer to come, institutions of religious worship—the law of Moses, and the ancient temple.

3. That in many prominent instances, their fathers had dishonored their best men; had failed to recognize their mission from God—thus exemplifying and foreshadowing the very sins of the men who had rejected and murdered Jesus of Nazareth.

4. That their fathers had many a time fearfully lapsed into idolatry; provoked their God to forsake and destroy them, so that a long catalogue of crimes lay against them waiting for the day of a terrible retribution.

5. That these shortcomings—these egregious national sins, had compelled their God to introduce great changes in his methods with his professed people; and at the time then present had brought him to the point of a great vital revolution in the whole external economy of his administration.

6. Finally, having reached the point in this arraignment where, having charged upon them their great and damning guilt, he was prepared (apparently) to say—“Nothing less than speedy repentance and fleeing for mercy to the same Jesus whom ye have crucified can save you from utter and

swift destruction"—he is cut short and hurried to his death. Plainly the concluding appeal of this address is wanting, being foreclosed by the outburst of rage and violence which fills its legitimate place.

1. Then said the high priest, Are these things so?

2. And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,

3. And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee.

Stephen's address is at once fraternal and respectful:—Ye men who are both brethren and fathers:—literally brother-men and fathers, I crave a hearing.

"The God of glory"—is not precisely the glorious God; the phrase does not designate him as the One who dwells in the heavens in "light unapproachable;" but rather, as He who manifested himself to Israel in the glory of the pillar of cloud and of a visible Presence [the Shechinah] above the mercy-seat, beneath the cherubim.

His first appearance to our father Abraham was in his original home, Mesopotamia, a general name for the whole region between the two great rivers—Euphrates and Tigris. This was before his residence in Haran [the Hebrew orthography for Charran].—The special object of this remove was to draw him away from the influence of his idolatrous surroundings. Joshua (24: 2) is our authority for the fact that "they served other gods."—The English words—"Come into the land which I shall show thee"—is more definite than the Greek—the sense of which is—Into the land, *whatever* it may be, which I shall show—into whatever land I may indicate—which brings these words into full harmony with Heb. 11: 8: "Abraham went forth, not knowing whither he went."

4. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldæans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.

5. And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child.

6. And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years.

7. And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I

judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.

Haran in upper Mesopotamia was one stage forward in Abraham's migration from his ancestral home ("Ur of the Chaldees"), to Canaan, the land of his ultimate destination. His stop in Haran was due (we may suppose) to the infirmities of his very aged father [Terah]—too great to bear the journey to Canaan. Consequently Abraham delayed here till the death of his father, and then proceeded to his own land of promise.—[For the chronological difficulty over the question of the age of Terah at Abraham's birth and also at his own death, see my "Pentateuch," pages 64, 65].—I accept the statement (Gen. 11: 32) which makes Terah's whole age 205 years, and his age at Abraham's birth 130.

The sojourning in Egypt is made in round numbers 400 years (v. 6). This is another debated point in Hebrew chronology. (See my Pentateuch, pages 62-64). The question at issue lies between 215 years and 430, as the duration of Israel's sojourn in Egypt—the evidence preponderating strongly for the longer period.

8. And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.

9. And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt; but God was with him,

10. And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.

11. Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt, and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance.

12. But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.

13. And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.

14. Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, three score and fifteen souls.

15. So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,

16. And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem.

The "envy" of Joseph's brethren had its analogy in the malice of the Jews against Jesus, so that Stephen's allusion to it was apparently designed to be suggestive. God will surely be with and for the wronged and innocent party.

Let this venerable council take notice of this great moral lesson in our nation's history!

V. 15, 16 seem to assume that not only Joseph and Jacob, but all the patriarchs were taken to Canaan for burial.

In our present text there is difficulty in the point that *Abraham* is said to have bought the family tomb at Sychem; whereas, his purchase was at Hebron (Gen. 23: 1-10) and Jacob's at Sychem (Gen. 33: 19) where Joseph also was buried (Josh. 24: 32).—The word "*Abraham*" may be a textual error for Jacob. This solution seems more obvious and satisfactory than any other.

17. But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,
18. Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.

19. The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

20. In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months.

21. And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.

22. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

23. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.

24. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:

25. For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.

26. And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?

27. But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?

28. Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?

29. Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons.

Stephen expands the history of Moses fully, adducing several points of very great general interest, and some that bear very suggestively by way of analogy upon the sin of the Jews in rejecting Jesus, especially the passage v. 35 and onwards.

In v. 18 "another king" assumes another dynasty—noticed here to account for the great change of governmental policy toward the Hebrew people. [This subject is treated in my "*Pentateuch*," pages 216-220.]

In v. 19 the authorized version assumes that the Egyptians treated the Hebrews with such severity that they actually cast out their own infant offspring to perish. The sense of the original is probably what is called *telic*;—they oppressed the Hebrew parents *for the purpose* of making them expose their offspring to perish—which, however, does not imply that this plan was successful and that those Hebrew parents did murder their own offspring. The truth seems rather to have been that this scheme failed and that the Egyptians resorted to yet other methods of child-murder, none of which were very successful. Certainly none of them availed to check the rapid increase of Hebrew population.

Pharaoh's daughter "*took up*" Moses, in the technical sense of adopting him as her own. The phrase is supposed to have come into use from the practice of the father taking up to his own bosom the babe he proposed to rear, in distinction from those which were left to perish.

In the life of Moses, Stephen makes three quite distinct forty-year periods;—the first in the court of Pharaoh (v. 23), cut short by the events recorded (vs. 23–29); the second in Arabia ["the land of Midian"], also of forty years (v. 30)—terminated by God's manifestations at the burning bush; and the third, delivering and leading forth Israel another forty years (v. 36) to his death at the age of one hundred and twenty (Deut. 34: 7). A more eventful human life—a greater man, endowed and used of God for greater ends—where shall we go to find?

On verse 23 we may ask—What put it in his heart just then and not before, to visit his oppressed brethren of Israel?—and find no answer save that which refers it ultimately to God.—Or (on v. 25) we may ask what reason he had to suppose that his brethren would understand that God would deliver them by his hand;—but no answer appears. We must suppose it was made clear to himself. Probably his brethren ought to have understood on this point more than they did. Stephen gives all the history in the case which was necessary to suggest the analogy between those dull-minded Hebrews and the far more guilty, self-blinded Jews of his time, who *would* not see in Jesus of Nazareth their own deliverer.

30. And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.

31. When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him,

32. Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.

33. Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground.

34. I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.

These facts of the history are in themselves profoundly interesting. One point may have been purposely suggestive as bearing on the charge against Stephen of dishonoring the temple;—viz., that the ground where Moses stood before the burning bush was "*holy*." Any place is holy ground where God is; and no temple, be it never so magnificent, can be sacred after God has abandoned it and manifests his presence there no more. Had those Jews, sitting in grave council as Stephen's judges, thought of this?

It should be noticed that he whom God calls "the angel of the Lord" (v. 30) declares of himself (v. 31-34)—"I am the God of Abraham," etc.; that the voice is said to be "the voice of the Lord," and that the entire description makes him divine. The best explanation assumes that this angel [or messenger] was truly the revealer of God under the old dispensation and identical with the Logos—"the Word made flesh," and thus revealing God, under the new. Numerous passages and special arguments might be adduced to sustain this view; but it would seem sufficient to refer to Ex. 23: 20-23;—"Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries."

35. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

36. He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders

and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

Beyond question Stephen made a specially suggestive point here. This "refusing" looks to the facts put in vs. 24-28. They spurned the interposition of Moses to deliver them from their Egyptian oppressors, yet God took him up; indeed had long been training him for this service and now called him, clothed him with the requisite miraculous powers and made him the nation's glorious deliverer.—Analogously to this, God had provided his own Son; had enthroned him on high as the world's great Redeemer—all despite of the puny opposition of scribe, Pharisee and Sadducee.

37. This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.

38. This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the Mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

39. To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,

40. Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

41. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

42. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?

43. Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

The prophecy of the Messiah by Moses (Deut. 18: 15, etc.) was very pertinent in this defense. Your own Moses spake of this very Jesus whom ye have slain, solemnly charging you to "*hear him*."

"In the *church*"—this word being used in the same sense as "*congregation*," currently applied to the assembled people of Israel in their wilderness life. Moses was continually with that revealing angel who talked with him on Mount Sinai and "*with our fathers*"—in the sense of being a Mediator [messenger] between the two parties, receiving the law from the Angel and communicating it to the fathers.

Thus the living [life-giving] oracles [revelations] of God came to us.

They “turned back to Egypt in their heart” in the two-fold sense of longing for its luxuries in the place of their “light” diet of manna, but yet more, in their proclivities toward the idol-worship of Egypt.—“Gods to go before us”—not to lead us back into Egypt, but to lead us on, out of this wilderness;—to be our God in the sense of One whom we may worship and may follow.—“As for this Moses”—said in contemptuous words and tone—he has left us and gone, we know not where. But there was far less reason in what they said than they supposed.—Vs. 42, 43 assume that their mad passion for idols was so abusive and so grievous to Jehovah that he abandoned them to their heart’s desire, even to worship the heavenly bodies and to carry (secretly, we may suppose) the tent of the god Moloch and the star of the god Remphan, all their way through their journeying in the desert. [On the probable sense of these words, Moloch; Remphan, see my Notes on Amos 5: 25–27.] On some points of no great practical importance, critics have held various opinions: as to the general sense,—idolatrous images, fostering secret idol worship, there is no uncertainty.—The question (v. 42)—“Have ye offered to me slain beasts,” etc., is put by a Gr. particle which assumes a negative answer:—Did ye indeed sacrifice *to me*? Not at all; far from it. In your hearts ye were all the time worshipping those secret idols.—For this incurable idolatry God doomed them to their seventy years’ captivity, beyond Babylon.—Stephen draws a dark, humiliating picture of the Hebrew fathers in the wilderness and onward—all suggesting that a like spirit of apostasy from the true God was still rank and most offensive in their then living descendants.

44. Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.

45. Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David,

46. Who found favor before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.

“The tabernacle of witness”—so called (Num. 9: 15 and 17: 8) as bearing perpetual testimony to a present God and to the revelations of his will. It held as its sa-

cred trust the two tables of the law which testified as to God's will.

In v. 45 the name "Jesus" should have been Joshua. The Septuagint version spells the name "Joshua" Jesus—a fact which begets this confusion—both here and in Heb. 4: 8. Of course, the reference here must be to that Joshua who led Israel into Canaan.

47. But Solomon built him an house.

48. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands: as saith the prophet,

49. Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is my place of rest?

50. Hath not my hand made all these things?

The question of the temple and its permanence was one of the issues made in the indictment against Stephen (6: 13); and hence called for these statements. Solomon did indeed build a temple for Jehovah; and yet as Paul also said on Mars' Hill (Acts 17: 24); "The Most High can not be contained within hand-made temples": and Isaiah said in sublime strains (66: 1, 2)—"Heaven is my throne; the earth is my footstool; what house, therefore, can ye build for me?"—commensurate to the vastness of my being and befitting my infinite glory!

The inference which Stephen would suggest may be of this sort: The hand-made temple rebuilt by Herod is of far less consequence than ye would assume. If God shall have left it, it may go down suddenly under his terrible judgments against an apostate people!

51. Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

52. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One: of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

53. Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

This arraignment was awfully true, and yet keenly harrowing upon their proud souls. Of nothing were they more proud than of their religious reputation—of being God's peculiar people—both having his law and being its recognized and honored teachers and illustrative examples. Therefore, to have a prisoner at their bar under indictment for blasphemy, charge them with being obstinately rebellious

against the true God ; “uncircumcised in heart and ears” (worse than the heathen) and “always resisting the Holy Ghost,” even like their idolatrous fathers whose dark record he had been recalling to their thought—this was in their view unutterably exasperating and outrageous!—Which of the old prophets did not your wicked fathers persecute? And ye are doing the same thing! They put to death the men who foretold to us the coming of the Just One—our nation’s Messiah and Redeemer, and ye have now betrayed and murdered him!—Ye being men who received the law—*i. e.*, inasmuch as ye (through your fathers) did receive the law by means of the interposition of angels (see for this fact Gal. 3: 19 and Heb. 2: 2)—a circumstance which heightened the evidence of its being from God, and thus greatly aggravated their guilt in not having kept it.—The word “disposition” here has no reference to a state of mind, but rather to their physical agency in the giving of the law from Sinai. The Greek preposition before this noun [*eis* when we should expect *dia*] involves difficulties of construction ; yet the general sense of the passage is clear and certain. The sentence seems to be elliptical, omitting some word of this sort :—This law having been imparted, conveyed, along serried hosts of angels.

Such was the climax of this powerful, scathing, withering speech.

54. When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

55. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56. And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58. And east him out of the city, and stoned him : and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul.

The strongest words are used to express their fury, madness and almost demoniac frenzy. They were sawn asunder through their very heart! They gnashed their teeth, howling in their rage (as the Greek word suggests).

Of this vision of the opened heavens, we can know only what is said, and this explains nothing as to the *manner* in which this revelation was made. It was *supernatural*. This

word lifts it at once above the normal experiences of men and above the natural operation of any laws with which we are familiar.—He saw the effulgence of God's glory. He saw Jesus, not *sitting* as the scriptures most often represent him, but standing as if he had arisen in his majesty to sustain his dying servant.—Observe, Stephen says—"The Son of man"—a name never elsewhere used of Christ, except by himself. Apparently Stephen would say—I saw that glorious Being who calls himself "the Son of man."

It is legitimate for us to inquire whether there are obvious reasons for granting to this first Christian martyr these beatific visions.

We may answer: 1. They are introduced as a result (in its highest form, probably) of being "filled with the Holy Ghost."

2. They were inexpressibly consoling to his heart under those extremest trials that human flesh ever bears.

3. It may be supposed they were granted to this first Christian martyr for the inspiration of hosts of imperilled men soon to follow him through agony and death to a martyr's crown. For such a purpose this was preëminently the time and the place for this manifestation.

4. Finally; it may have been designed to bear to his murderers God's solemn testimony that they were putting to death a man of God, an heir of heaven; upon whose dying eye, visions of heavenly glory were even then breaking forth to view. That they repelled this testimony by no means proves that God did not give it for a testimony. Their blindness and deafness revealed their guilt the more.

Not to pollute a city so sacred with the blood of such a man, they first cast him out, and then stoned him to death. So the blasphemer in the wilderness (Lev. 24: 14) was "stoned without the camp."—By Jewish law, the witnesses cast the first stone (Deut. 17: 7); for convenience, first laying off their outer garments. That Saul took charge of these garments is mentioned here to introduce him to the reader as a man then in full sympathy with this prosecution and murder. (So the first clause of chap. 8.)

59. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

The word "*God*" in *italics* (v. 59) has no textual author-

ity. The Greek says merely, "They stoned Stephen, he making invocation and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The word, "making invocation," affirms that he called *upon* [some one], without naming the being addressed; but this the historian gives by quoting Stephen's own words—"Lord Jesus." Elsewhere this participle [making invocation] [epikaloumenos] is repeatedly used of those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 1: 2, and Acts 22: 16 and 9: 14, 21. Compare also Acts 2: 21 and 22: 16, and Rom. 10: 12, 13).—His prayer, surrendering his departing spirit, was addressed to his own recognized Lord, even the risen and glorified Jesus whom he saw at the right hand of God—very decisive authority for prayer to Jesus, and consequently a proof of his true divinity.

"Lay not this sin to their charge," is perfectly in sympathy with the last prayer of Jesus for his enemies: "Father, forgive them." Thus the natural sublimity of this scene—a man meeting death fearlessly under the murderous hand of wild fanaticism, is doubly sublime in its moral grandeur—imploping God to waive all record of this sin, and still hold himself ready to forgive and to save.—That his death was said to be a "falling asleep" must be construed to mean that his end was peace. Jesus had appropriated this word for the case of Lazarus; and Paul describes those who die "in Christ" by the same beautiful symbol (1 Cor. 15: 18, and 1 Thess. 4: 14).

Thus on the first page of this brief church history of those marvelous times, there flashes forth with a brilliancy almost unparalleled, this last and only recorded speech of Stephen and his triumphant martyr-death.—Of his antecedent history we are told nothing. How long he had been in the Christian brotherhood; whether his profound familiarity with the Old Testament scriptures had been reached as a Christian or as a Jewish student; what promise he might have given previously of the power that was in him; whether it developed itself suddenly under his baptism of the Spirit, to the surprise of the whole Christian community—we are left to conjecture. More knowledge of his case we may ask for, but we ask in vain. We shall doubtless be safe in attributing a large measure of his wonderful powers to the presence of the Holy Ghost, filling his utmost capacities.

CHAPTER VIII.

Persecution becomes general and severe, scattering the disciples abroad (vs. 1-4); Philip to Samaria; his great success there (vs. 5-8); Simon the magician—at first professes faith (vs. 9-13); Peter and John visit Samaria (vs. 14-17); Simon's simony, proposing to buy with money the power of the Holy Ghost (vs. 18-24); Philip and the eunuch of Ethiopia (vs. 25-40).

1. And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the apostles.

2. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

3. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison.

4. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every-where preaching the word.

With the general purpose of describing this outburst of hot persecution, the historian blends the special purpose of bringing to our notice the young man Saul, now fiercest among the persecutors. He was present at Stephen's death, "consenting" (as our Auth. Ver. has it) but the Greek word is even stronger—*well pleased*; in hearty sympathy with that tragic scene. "He made havoc of the church," savagely wasting and desolating it; forcing his way into private houses and dragging forth men and women, to commit them to prison. "Haling" is an old word for hauling; rudely dragging them along.

Speaking in general terms, all the church at Jerusalem except the apostles were scattered abroad over Judea and Samaria; but (as often happens) the persecution which aimed to destroy the church served to send abroad more widely its earnest words of salvation. So God makes the wrath of man work out his own praise.

"All except the apostles," who perhaps interpreted too rigidly the command—"Tarry ye in Jerusalem;" or assumed it to remain in force after its purpose had been accomplished. In process of time, yielding to the construction of it which providential events forced upon them, they too, most of them, went abroad with the gospel message.

Stephen's death was a great, not to say an irreparable loss. Did the mourners who bore him to his honored grave pray God to fill his place with another man of like spirit and power? If so, their prayer may have been heard and answered in the conversion of Saul—a way no human mind would have thought of! But God's ways are so often high above man's thought that nothing in this line ought ever to surprise us. The historian brings the two names, Stephen and Saul, together as if he would suggest their mutual relations.

5. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

6. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

7. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

8. And there was great joy in that city.

This is Philip the evangelist [deacon] of Acts 6: 5 and 21: 8—one of the seven, named next after Stephen; and is not Philip the apostle, who should be included (v. 1) among the rest remaining in Jerusalem.

Some doubt hangs over the question whether this "city of Samaria" is the city bearing this name, or some other well known city in the province—perhaps Sychar where Jesus spent two days with very hopeful results (John 4:) The main points bearing on this question are—that, elsewhere in the New Testament, Samaria is the province, not the city; and that "*the* city of Samaria" may surely mean some other well known city in that province.—Yet the probabilities are that if the historian had referred to any other city, he would have named it.—The people were drawn by the miracle to give earnest attention to Philip's preaching. It was one of the first objects of those miracles to draw attention and to impress a conviction of the preacher's divine mission.—In v. 7 the older manuscript authorities support this reading: "Many of those having unclean spirits came out—the spirits crying with loud voice." This crying, coming not from the human subject but from the foreign spirit, then being expelled, is variously attributed to resistance; to rage; or to their recognition of a higher power terrible to themselves. (See Mark 1: 26 and 3: 11 and 9: 26 and Luke 4: 41).

The palsied and the lame—well known infirmities incident to human flesh, are broadly distinguished from demoniacal possessions. The miracle-working power of Philip availed for either class.

“Great joy”—due in part to these miracalous cures, bringing relief to men long sorely afflicted with physical suffering, and relief to their friends on their behalf; but more, doubtless, to the peace and gladness of souls new-born to God. What myriads could testify that such joy is “*great!*” If the spiritual power of a genuine work of God pervaded this city of Samaria, no more truthful report of results than this could be given in so few words;—“Great joy in that city.”

9. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

10. To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

11. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with soreeries.

12. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

Sorcery, coupled with various magic arts, has appeared among all unchristian nations in every age of time—one of Satan's grand schemes of deception, delusion and malign influence over the human mind. The law given of God through Moses forbad all tampering with such arts, and punished every class of magicians severely.

This case of Simon well illustrates their spirit—the ruling passion being the love of money and the love of notoriety—giving out that himself was something great and laboring to make the duped people cry out—“This man is the great power of God!” See what superhuman deeds he works!—For a long time Simon had held undisputed sway over the credulous, deluded people;—till Philip's preaching broke the spell and brought them to know Christ. Simon's occupation being gone and his distinctive honor as a magician with it, what should he do but fall into the general current of popular feeling; believe and be baptized—perhaps thinking to try his hand for distinction in this new line of opera-

tions. Precisely what motives other than these may have acted on him, is not said; but the sequel showed plainly that his old passion for money and pre-eminence was by no means slain. Consequently his apostasy was only a question of time, waiting its opportunity.

14. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John :

15. Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost :

16. (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them : only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

17. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

In religious belief and practice, the Samaritans held middle ground between the Jew and the Gentile.—Their religious doctrines are indicated somewhat in the history of the visit and labors of our Lord among them (John 4:). Hence this revival of religion among them, while it awakened profound interest among the apostles at Jerusalem, did not by any means bring up the great question which Peter had to grapple with when summoned (Acts 10:) to visit the Roman centurion, Cornelius, at Cesarea.

This "receiving of the Holy Ghost" must be understood, not of his ordinary spiritual influences in the conviction and regeneration of men, but of those extraordinary spiritual gifts which were peculiar to the early Christian age. This history shows that these extraordinary gifts were imparted through imposition of the apostles' hands. Apparently Philip had not this power. Peter and John had it.

18. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

19. Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

20. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

21. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter : for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

22. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

23. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

24. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

25. And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

When Simon saw this, a bright thought struck his mind:—This would do more for me than my old magic ever did! I can afford to pay a good price for it. And so he offered them money for this power.—Peter was moneyless; often enough felt the need of some; but none the less for this did his soul fire up with indignation against this base suggestion. “Thy money perish with thee! Thou hast no part or lot in this gospel of salvation; thy heart is utterly sordid and covetous, alien from the spirit of Jesus.”

In v. 22, the word “perhaps” suggests that Peter could give him no assurance of forgiveness in answer to his prayer, but prayer and penitence were his only hope. His soul lay under the awful bands of sin steeped in the gall of its bitter and deadly poison.—The words (v. 23) are fearfully strong—the Greek preposition [eis] being quite peculiar, indicating that he had sunk *into* this bondage, to its very depths of moral pollution and tyrannous sway.—Simon’s request for their prayers (v. 24) was probably not very earnest; of his praying for himself there is no intimation.

The sin of this historic character (Simon) has given his name—“Simony”—to the sin of buying or selling spiritual benefices, preferments—the attaining of ecclesiastical place and prerogatives by means of a money transaction. English law subjects this crime to severe penalties.

26. And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

27. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem to worship,

28. Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

29. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

31. And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

An angel of the Lord is sent to direct Philip where to go that he may meet a certain man whom the Lord wishes to

have him see.—Again (v. 29) the Spirit gives him another specific direction—Go near and make the acquaintance of the distinguished man riding in that chariot. God's methods of giving these specific directions were various.

Ethiopia, an African kingdom lying south of Egypt, was remote from Judea. The allusions to it here are in full harmony with known facts of history. The kingdom was governed for a long period by queens, bearing the name "Candace," used like the name Cesar in Rome and Pharaoh in Egypt. Strabo and Dio testify to a queen of this name making war against the Romans in the twenty-second or twenty-third year of Augustus; and Pliny to another queen of the same name in the reign of Vespasian.—A eunuch in charge of the royal treasury is thoroughly according to Oriental usage. This man was manifestly either a Jew or a proselyte to Judaism—a worshiper in the temple at Jerusalem, and a student of the old Hebrew prophets.—Nothing could be more pertinent than Philip's question—"Understandest thou what thou readest?" The Greek particle which asks this question tacitly assumes that he does not:—May I judge from your manner that you fail to get the sense?—The question, however, is never impertinent, for the reading of scripture is of the least possible use unless what is read be understood. This man had sufficient good sense to know that the book was dark to him and that he needed some one to guide his inquiries and open those otherwise dark things to his clear apprehension.

32. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter: and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

33. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

34. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

35. Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

This passage (Isa. 53: 7, 8) is the standard Old Testament prophecy of a suffering, dying Messiah.—It is not easy to over-estimate the value of this inspired exposition. It settles forever these two great questions:

1. That Old Testament prophecy does reveal a suffering, atoning Messiah.

2. That it teaches these facts concerning his mission and

work, not by any indirection, but most directly and explicitly; *i. e.*, not by first describing particularly the prophet himself, or some other man of their time, as a *representative character* in some way typical or symbolical of the Messiah, and then leaving the reader to find the real Messiah in that old Hebrew prophet or king. — Philip testifies that those words of Isaiah are not said of himself, but of Jesus the Messiah. He began at that very scripture and answered the eunuch's question, virtually saying—Not of himself, but of some other one, and that one is Jesus of Nazareth.

It is quite supposable that the eunuch, while in Jerusalem, heard the question discussed which then profoundly moved the people and the doctors—Whether Jesus of Nazareth was the nation's Messiah, and whether his death met the significance of prophecy? Hence he may have been reading over those prophecies to inquire into their bearing on this great question. The ways of God in providence are often equal to such foregoing preparation for results such as this narrative records.

V. 33 has been interpreted somewhat variously. The construction which I prefer may be paraphrased thus:—In his low estate [the weakness of mortal flesh] all justice and right were denied him; and who can adequately set forth the guilt of the men of his time? for they took his very life! They murdered their own Messiah!

By another construction the middle clause is taken to mean; Yet who can recount the myriads of his people, his future followers?—But this seems to me far fetched, forced; and not well sustained by the last words—“*for he was slain.*”

36. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37. And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

38. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

39. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

40. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities till he came to Cæsarea.

The genuineness of v. 37 is in dispute, Tischendorf, with some of the oldest textual authorities, omitting it. The

weight of the authorities for and against seems to me to be rather nicely balanced. All that this text would teach, supposing it genuine, is taught so abundantly elsewhere that no great issue hangs upon this decision.

This case of baptism is often appealed to as one of great, if not even decisive, bearing to prove immersion to be the apostolic mode.—I may speak here as an interpreter—not as a controversialist—and say:

(a.) That in v. 36 the Greek words legitimately mean—They came to *some water*, and imply that the quantity was rather small than great. The same Greek pronoun appears in Acts 5: 2; “They brought some of their money”—i. e., a small part of it.—This sense is favored by the circumstance that this was a desert region, and that the sight of any water here was a surprise.

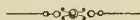
(b.) In v. 38, 39, “going down into the water,” and “coming up out of the water,” are essentially correct translations, save that the last clause might with equal accuracy be read “*from*” as “*out of*.” But this should be considered;—that if they had stepped down from their chariot to get some water to drink, it would be following oriental usage to step into the edge of the pool and take up what water they needed. That is; going down into the water does not of itself involve the act of immersion.

(c.) If the going down into the water was itself the immersion, then Philip was baptized as really as the eunuch, for the text declares very explicitly that “they both went down, both Philip and the eunuch.”—On the other alternative, viz., that the baptism is not described by their going down into the water, but was entirely a separate and a subsequent act, then the mode of it is not defined here. For having stepped into the water, the subsequent baptism may have been by pouring, or sprinkling, as well as by immersion. All the force the passage has in favor of immersion is the amount of probability that stepping into the water assumes immersion, rather than the other modes—sprinkling, pouring.—This seems to me the fair view of the sense of the passage and of its bearing on the mooted question of immersion as the apostolic mode.

In v. 39, the word used to describe the disappearance of Philip—“The Spirit of the Lord *caught* him away”—some-what favors the supposition of superhuman physical agency—something beyond a summons calling for his own exertion. Paul uses the same verb of himself, “*caught up to*

the third heaven" (2 Cor. 12: 2, 4).—That "he was *found*" at Azotus [Ashdod] favors the supposition of an extraordinary mode of transit from this place to that. Yet the utmost we can know of this matter is but little. Nor is it of special importance.—The translation (v. 39), should not be—"That the eunuch saw him no more," as if this was the purpose or object. The original means only *and*. The consequence of his being caught away is the only thing said, and this was—the eunuch saw him not again.

Philip preached in all the cities on his route northward along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean till he came to Cesarea, the well known city where Paul lay a prisoner two years (Acts 23 and 24), and where we find this Philip residing with his "four daughters who prophesied" (Acts 21: 8, 9). It seems probable that this was his residence many years.



CHAPTER IX.

The conversion of Saul (vs. 1-9); his restoration to sight and his baptism through the hand of Ananias (vs. 10-19); he preaches Christ with great power in Damascus (vs. 20-22); escapes death by persecution (vs. 23-25); is introduced to the disciples at Jerusalem; preaches Christ there, but is driven by persecution to his early home—Tarsus (vs. 26-31). Peter heals Eneas at Lydda (vs. 32-35), and raises Tabitha [Dorcas] to life at Joppa (vs. 36-43).

1. And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2. And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

No history of the primitive church could possibly omit Saul's conversion. For every reason it was one of the grandest events of all history, and was specially central and potent in the history of the early Christian church. Miraculous in its methods and agencies, fraught with the energies of the Spirit of God in new forms, and pregnant with results of far-reaching and wonderful power—we shall study it with profound interest and gather up its moral lessons as special illustrations of the matchless resources of God for the progress and triumphs of his kingdom.

The historian resumes the case of Saul as a man already introduced to the reader in the character of a bitter opponent of all disciples of the Lord: "Breathing out threatening and slaughter"—as one too full of this spirit to contain its pent-up emotions—the figure being taken from the fact that great excitement produces hard breathing.

He went to the high priest of his own motion, volunteering his services; and not as one sent at his instance. This seems to imply that he was a leading spirit in this persecution. He sought a commission in writing from the central power at Jerusalem to the synagogues at Damascus to push this bloody enterprise of hunting Christian men and women to send them bound to Jerusalem for trial and punishment.—"Any of this *way*"—in the sense—way of thinking;—men who had embraced the doctrine of Jesus. So this word is used in Acts 19: 9, 23 and 22: 4 and 24: 14, 22.

The city, Damascus, was old as the time of Abraham; beautifully located on a plain between the great Libanus and Anti-Libanus mountain ranges; one hundred and forty miles north by east from Jerusalem, and having a large Jewish population. Josephus states that under Nero, ten thousand Jews were massacred here at one time.

Who was high priest at this time can not be known with certainty. If the event is correctly dated in A. D. 36, he was either the same Caiaphas under whom Jesus was put to death (said by some authorities to have held this office till the Passover—A. D. 37) or Jonathan, his successor.

3. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

4. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5. And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

6. And he, trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

7. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

8. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

9. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

Of this wonderful event we have two accounts from Paul

himself, besides this one from Luke his historian :—viz., the first before the Jewish Sanhedrim, recorded Acts 22: 3–21; the second before Agrippa, found in Acts 26: 9–20. In all these accounts the staple facts are the same; the discrepancies trivial. Luke (v. 7) says of the men with Saul—“Hearing a voice, but seeing no man;” while Paul says (22: 9) “They heard not the voice of him that spake unto me;”—the former (supposably) meaning that they heard a sound only but no articulate words—with which Paul’s statement is in full accord, meaning—they had no sense of what that voice was saying to me. The Lord Jesus spake to Saul only, for his intelligent understanding, and not for theirs.*

We turn now to the great facts of the case. As they drew near Damascus, about mid-day there flashed down from heaven a great light, “above the brightness of the sun” (26: 13), shining round about both Saul and his fellow-travelers, and prostrating the whole company to the earth. More vital and more wonderful than all else was the voice that fell upon his ear:—“Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” What have I done to justify this fierce and mad persecution of *me* in the person of my people?—To this, Saul’s first reply was—“Who art thou, Lord?” Saul recognized the voice as coming down from the heavens; but did not know it as the voice of that Jesus whose disciples he was hunting for imprisonment, trial and death.—The first reply of Jesus brought him this knowledge, identifying the speaker with that Jesus whom he was persecuting. This must have been a most astounding revelation. Yet it was no part of the object of Jesus in this appearance to overwhelm Saul with terror or to crush him with fear of the vengeance of the Almighty. Rather, the revelation breathes the spirit of tenderness and even pity;—Thy lot is a hard one—kicking against the goads of thy conscience and of thy better moral nature—bringing thee only unrest—torture—not satisfaction—not such peace of soul as the gos-

* Comparing these two passages in the Greek (9: 7 and 22: 9) the former has the word “voice” in the genitive case; the latter, in the accusative. The former therefore makes “voice” the source or cause of the hearing (heard something *from* a real voice); the latter makes “voice” the very thing heard, and moreover heard in the perfect sense of *understanding* what the voice said. This is denied. In this sense, they did *not* hear that voice. This fuller, complete sense of the verb “hear” may be seen in 1 Cor. 14: 2 and Mark 4: 43.

pel of salvation loves to bring to worn, weary and desolate hearts.

It would seem that the main points of revealed truth, here brought into Saul's mind were these two: (*a*) That Jesus of Nazareth whom he is persecuting is in the heavens, clothed with the majesty and power of the Son of God;—and (*b*) That this exalted Jesus reveals himself in loving kindness, in pity, in tenderness, despite of all his own causeless persecution and wicked rage and bloody murder, as of Stephen and of as many more as he could lay hands upon.—Here, then, were new things to think of,—making a pungent appeal to his better moral nature, and a call to repentance—to the most radical change of heart and life that is possible for mortal man.

This narrative passes without notice the processes of thought in Saul's mind—the sense of sin and guilt; the prayer for mercy; the power of such manifested love breathing in gently upon a soul smitten with an awful shudder of horror to find itself involved in such guilt and madness against the Son of God!

But these thought-processes crop out long afterward in Paul's epistles, as (*e. g.*) “Who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief;”—and “the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant;”—“that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1: 13–16).—“I am not meet to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God.” “But by the grace of God, I am what I am” (1 Cor. 15: 9, 10).

The narrative here in its brevity says little save that Saul, trembling and astonished, cried out—“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”—indicating his prompt readiness to obey the voice from heaven. “Immediately I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision” (Acts 26: 19). Three days of new thought with no sight of earthly things to divert his mind, sufficed for the Spirit of God to reveal to him what Jesus had for him to do, and to lead out his soul in mighty prayer. “Behold, he prayeth” (v. 11).

10. And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

11. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

12. And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

13. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem :

14. And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way : for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel :

16. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

These times are peculiar for the free and frequent use of *visions* in carrying forward the gospel work. By a vision Ananias is apprised that Saul, lately the great persecutor, is praying, but is blind ; and that the Lord had designated him as his instrument for restoring his sight.—At first this disciple is incredulous as to so great a change in such an one as Saul. [Shall we suppose a little doubt in his mind whether this vision were really God's voice? A well authenticated word from the Lord should at once have dispelled all doubt as to the reality of Saul's change.]

Observe also that Saul by a like vision has received notice that a certain disciple (Ananias) had been designated as God's instrument for his restoration to sight. Thus by similar agencies both were prepared for this joyful meeting and for its results.

It is neither impertinent nor foreign from our purpose to inquire, Why the necessity and what the wisdom of bringing in Ananias at all in this way?

The question opens an interesting view of the divine economy in at least these two directions:—(a.) It introduces human agency as an instrumentality in Saul's great change. Up to this point all human agency had been, apparently, ignored. No Christian friend had labored with this malign persecutor to bring gospel truth into his mind : no manifested Christian tenderness had helped to touch and melt his hard soul. If he had been made a special subject of prayer, the world does not know it ; no record of it remains.—But there is profound wisdom in the common law of God's spiritual administration, under which, in all real conversions, the hand of man coöperates with the hand of God. It serves admirably to bind the old converts and the new in precious gospel bonds. It disciplines and nurtures all the Christian graces of the church ; it quickens their love ; inspires their

zeal; gives life and soul to their faith; fresh experience and augmented power in prayer. The whole scheme of Christian labor for the conversion of men would be a totally different thing if this divine law of coöperative human agency were blotted out.

In the case before us, Ananias represents this human agency. His hand serves to link this new convert, Saul, to the living church of his time.

(b.) Incidentally another object was gained by the use of Ananias, viz., to introduce Saul to the knowledge and confidence of the Christian brotherhood. The careful reader of our chapter will surely notice that those who were smarting under the rod of his persecution, or trembling under the fear of it, were very slow to give credit to any professions of discipleship which he might make. Perhaps he had been tricky and artful, as well as malign and terribly in earnest. Every thing looks as if the disciples had been forewarned of shrewd deception and schemy plots as means for getting his hand upon the men and women whom he was hunting down. Certainly they were wary and slow to believe that he was a true disciple.——But the agency of Ananias came in beautifully to dispel these fears and to give them confidence in this new and wonderful accession to their Christian brotherhood and to their spiritual forces.——Thus the work wrought by Ananias justifies the introduction of his agency.

In the very outset of Saul's Christian life, the Lord enabled him to count well the cost of his great gospel enterprise. "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." The work was immense; the sacrifices to be made were severe, almost beyond a parallel in human history. Therefore the Lord would have his servant measure them well at the very threshold, and so be less open to the danger of fainting by the way when the conflict should wax hot and his endurance be taxed to the utmost.

17. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

18. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

19. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened.

Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

Ananias brought to Saul a double blessing—sight to his blind eyes, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, in the special sense common in that age.

As to the physical cause of Saul's blindness—the nature of that something which “fell from his eyes as it had been scales”—it will be of small use to inquire. Facts which pass beyond the known and the knowable laws of nature into the realm of the superhuman and miraculous, are not wont to submit to our tests, or respond to our inquiries, or in any way honor our investigations. We may suppose that Luke—a man of some medical science—had often heard Paul speak of his sensations when this change passed over him from blindness to full vision. But these sensations reveal nothing as to the physical cause of his blindness.

His nervous power being restored by food from the prostration due to his three days' fasting, he associated delightfully (we must suppose) with his new friends—the disciples at Damascus. Were they not glad in the Lord and grateful for such an acquisition?

20. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

21. But all that heard him were amazed, and said: Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

22. But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

Forthwith, the synagogue rings with new tones—of a voice never heard on such themes before! and the synagogue worshipers could scarcely believe their own eyes and ears.—All at once Saul seems to have mastered the theology of his new religion. The argument from scripture that Jesus of Nazareth is the very Messiah came easy to him (we must assume), because of his previous training in the Hebrew schools of learning.

23. And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

24. But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

25. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

How much time is covered by the words "many days" (v. 23) can not be known absolutely. It is highly probable that it includes the time spent in Arabia (Gal. 1: 17), from which country he returned to Damascus before he went up to Jerusalem.—In Damascus Saul had time for a somewhat protracted work in "preaching Christ" in their synagogues before the spirit of persecution rose against him and compelled the disciples to withdraw him from its fury.—This was Saul's first experience of life-peril from the same fierce, mad spirit in Jewish souls which he had once breathed out from his own. That it made a deep impression of the peril to which his work for Christ must subject him appears in his reference to this very scene (2 Cor. 11: 32, 33) in which he recounts the salient points of his great life-conflicts and perils.

Secreted probably in a house built on the city wall, he was put out through a window opening over the wall and let down in a large basket, such as was used for grain. See a similar case in Josh. 2: 15.

26. And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

27. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

28. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

29. And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians; but they went about to slay him.

30. Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Cæsarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

31. Then had the churches rest throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

The same fear and incredulity are to be overcome at Jerusalem as first at Damascus. His three years' life in Arabia, subsequent to his conversion, may in part account for their being so ignorant of his conversion.—How Barnabas came to know him so soon does not appear. Supposably, "being a good man and full of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 11: 24) his great heart, under the power of quick sympathy, felt the presence of a like spirit in Saul. Thus introduced to each other, their future labors together followed in the natural

order of most delightful Christian fellowship and mutual confidence.

The "Grecians" here are the Hellenists who appear in Acts 6, warmly disputing with Stephen—*i. e.*, men of Jewish nationality, but by foreign residence, familiar with the Greek tongue, as was Saul also. Supposably here are some of the same men who opposed Stephen so furiously and led on the persecution which cost his life. It is in their thought to take off Saul by similar means.—To put him in safety, the brethren send him down to Cæsarea and thence to his native city, Tarsus. This is the same Cæsarea which appears again in Paul's history (Acts 23: 23 and onward). Probably he passed over the same route which, years later, saved him again from the murderous plots of Jewish rage.

After Saul's removal from the arena of strife at Jerusalem, a season of rest from persecution ensued, and the churches enjoyed a delightful prosperity, beautifully described as "walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost."

Here in Tarsus Luke's narrative leaves Saul until (Acts 11: 25) Barnabas goes there to find him for gospel work in Antioch.—Tarsus, chief city of Cilicia, on the river Cydnus, was highly cultured, having a reputation for letters which rivaled Athens and Alexandria. At and about this center, he is supposed to have spent some four years, not idly, we are sure, but preaching and planting churches which he visited again at a later period. (See 15: 23, 41.) The supposition is neither improbable nor void of interest, that here in the home of his childhood, he won to Christ those kinsmen including sister and sister's son, who come to light in later history (Rom. 16: 7, 11, 21, and Acts 23: 16).

32. And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

33. And there he found a certain man named Æneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

34. And Peter said unto him, Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

35. And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

Luke suspends his personal history of Saul until chap. 11: 25–30, and resumes his account of Peter's labors, and especially of his miracles.

Lydda, some twelve miles from Joppa (the modern Jaffa), fell into the missionary circuit Peter was then making. The

miracle wrought upon Æneas gave a great impulse to his labors. The *manner* of this miracle was peculiar—nothing being said of faith on the part of the invalid, or of any intermediate agency. Peter only accosted him by name, saying, “Jesus Christ is making thee whole; arise, therefore, and make thy bed.” Did Peter *know* that Jesus was then healing this chronic invalid? If so, *how* did he know it? We can only answer:—he had faith. He spake under the immediate impulse of the Spirit. This is all we need to say—all we *can* say. An impostor could not rationally venture upon such a command; he would do so, if at all, only to fail. That Peter was divinely led is the only reasonable hypothesis in the case.

Saron (v. 35)—not a city, but the name of a country—an extensive plain stretching along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean from Joppa to Cæsarea, is better known as Sharon, celebrated for its fertility and beauty.

36. Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas; this woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did.

37. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died; whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

38. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.

39. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber; and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

40. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

42. And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

43. And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

This Joppa is a well known port and city on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean, lying north of west from Jerusalem, at the point where travel leaves the shore for the holy city. Here a well-known disciple (Tabitha, or Dorcas), distinguished and beloved for all good works and alms-deeds, had died. Peter being hastily summoned to the chamber where her remains were lying, raised her to life. The antecedent cir-

cumstances were only prayer, and his word of command—“Arise.” Then she opened her eyes, restored to life. Peter requested all the friends to withdraw before prayer, supposably that he might be uninterrupted, and so might give free scope to the earnestness of his soul. If this circumstance should appear suspicious, the record of it indicates conscious honesty and simplicity.—Moreover, the great excitement in the group of attendants was not favorable for thoughtful prayer.

This miracle became known widely and resulted in the turning of many to the Lord. This case and that at Lydda are on record here to illustrate the powerful influence of the miracles wrought by the apostles.

The deep affection and tender interest manifested in her death, especially by the widows whom she had so greatly blessed, seem to have singled out this case for miraculous interposition. The unselfish are always remembered tenderly. The suffering, dependent classes know not how to spare them.—On the contrary, the self-seeking whose lives and labors run within themselves and for themselves alone, can be spared with little grief and no showing of good works and alms-deeds done. The contrast between these two ways of living is sharp and extreme.



CHAPTER X.

This chapter shows how Peter was relieved of his Jewish scruples against communion with the uncircumcised Gentiles. The question came to issue in the case of a Roman centurion (Cornelius) whose course was directed by an angel sent in vision (vs. 1-8). By another extraordinary vision, Peter's mind was prepared for the interview with Cornelius (vs. 9-23). The meeting of these two men and their friends, described (vs. 24-33), and Peter's discourse on this occasion (vs. 34-43) resulting in the effusion of the Spirit upon those Gentile hearers and their baptism (vs. 44-48).

1. There was a certain man in Cæsarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,

2. A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

3. He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

4. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

5. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter :

6. He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side : he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

7. And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually ;

8. And when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

Cæsarea, the residence of the Roman Governor, was the station for a somewhat strong body of Roman soldiers, to keep the peace of the country and sustain the Roman supremacy. This particular band is called "Italian" because composed of men of Italy—more reliable here than men raised on the ground because more surely removed from special attachment or relationships to the resident population.

Very noticeable is the religious character of this Roman centurion. Of heathen antecedents; not a proselyte to Judaism; yet a man of prayer, distinguished for his beneficence; a man moreover, whose religious influence pervaded his household, and even reached outward to some of his soldiers (v. 7);—how shall we account for the existence of such a character, under such surroundings;—how, save as we refer it to that power of God upon human hearts which limits itself to no nationality—which manifests itself where we can trace with certainty no antecedent human agency to prepare its way. Such a man appears here, manifestly prepared of God to facilitate the introduction of gospel blessings among Gentiles. The great question had now come to issue, whether the Spirit of God and the full blessings of Jesus Christ could go directly to uncircumcised men, otherwise than through the ritualities of Moses, and despite of the long standing exclusiveness of the covenant people.

How grave this problem was; how much repugnance on the Jewish side it must encounter and overcome, is very apparent throughout this chapter, in the ministrations of angels bringing down the thought of God to good men best prepared to be his agents in this great transition from ex-

clusive Judaism to unrestricted Christianity. In this great crisis movement, the previous character of Cornelius was one of the first elements.

In v. 3 the word "evidently" should be taken in its physical sense—not its metaphysical—*i. e.*, of things apparent to the eye; not primarily to the mind.

To preclude all mistake, the house of Simon the tanner is pointed out very definitely. His business required a supply of water: sanitary considerations also may have required such a location.

9. On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the house-top to pray about the sixth hour:

10. And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

11. And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:

12. Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

13. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

14. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

15. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

16. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

Peter's sharp hunger gave special force to this direction—"Rise, Peter, kill and eat" any of these animals brought down thus before thee. Any or all are at your service.——Here Peter's Jewish scruples and life-long training spring to the front. He recoils from the thought—for, most if not all of this miscellaneous group were to him ceremonially unclean.—Not so, Lord; I have never allowed myself to eat any thing unclean.—The word "common" in this connection means unclean. The word "or" is not disjunctive, implying a distinction between "common" and "unclean," and affirming that he had never eaten either the one or the other. Rather it is explanatory;—common, that is to say, unclean. The better text has not "or" but "and"—common, and therefore unclean.

The voice responded "What God has made clean, do not thou call or consider unclean." For God has now abolished the old Mosaic distinctions, and has made all these animals of every sort equally clean. Therefore do not thou gainsay

his work and call any thing of this sort unclean.—This was the very point of this extraordinary revelation—that God had swept away the ancient, long-standing distinction between animals clean and unclean, and put them all upon the common footing of cleanness.—Moreover, it should be observed that this distinction between animals for food or for sacrifice as clean or unclean is put here to illustrate a general principle—a special case whose application was designed to cover the whole breadth of the ceremonial law and carry with it especially the distinction between the circumcised Jew and the uncircumcised Gentile. The social and religious exclusiveness of the Jew must cease, and he must see in every Gentile a friend and a brother—a man for whom God has provided salvation with all its prerogatives, as truly as for himself.—Thus this ceremonial distinction, after being in force fifteen hundred years, was abrogated by the same authority which enjoined it. It had a useful purpose—to cultivate the sense of moral purity; to dissociate the Israelite from the idolater as a protective measure against temptation toward idols and to make Israel more surely and thoroughly a “peculiar people.” But those purposes called for its continuance no longer. Its abuses had made the Jew self-righteous, exclusive, Pharisaical. A new religious dispensation called for an aggressive rather than a merely defensive policy; so that for every reason the time had fully come for that whole system to go down and give place to one in which “God is no respecter of persons,” and the outward is superseded by the inward.

17. Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,

18. And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

19. While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

20. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

21. Then Peter went down to the men [which were sent unto him from Cornelius]; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?

22. And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

23. Then called he them in, and lodged them. And on the

morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

While Peter was debating within himself—continuously questioning, canvassing the meaning of this vision—the messengers arrive and the good Spirit bids Peter go with them. First, the barriers of caste are so far broken down that Peter calls them in and hospitably entertains them over night. —The “certain brethren from Joppa” may have gone with Peter through their personal interest in this pending question, or through some divine monition;—for their presence as witnesses (v. 45) became a point of real importance.

24. And the morrow after they entered into Cæsarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

25. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

26. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

It is not perhaps certain that this prostration of Cornelius at Peter’s feet was idolatrous, for it may have been due to extreme oriental etiquette; yet Peter thought it excessive, if not even sinful. I myself am nothing more than a man—a *common* man, as his Greek word suggests.

27. And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

28. And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

29. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?

The purpose of his vision begins to open to Peter’s mind. God, he sees, has been preparing him for precisely this meeting. He is, therefore ready to affiliate, in the simplicity of Christian fellowship, with this group of uncircumcised Gentiles.

30. And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

31. And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

32. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side, who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

33. Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well

done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

Peter had heard the substance of this account from the messengers (v. 22); but in a matter of so much importance, it could not be amiss to hear it more in detail from Cornelius himself. The fullness of detail in this narrative testifies to the historian's sense of the magnitude of this question and of the vital nature of its bearings on the pending issue between Jew and Gentile.—Very expressive are these closing words of Cornelius:—"All here present *before God* to hear all the words God has given thee to say to us."

34. Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

35. But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

"No respecter of persons" on the score of nationality or of ceremonial distinctions. I see that God looks only upon the heart; never at the outside differences or peculiarities.—Of whatever nation he may be, the man who fears God and practices righteousness is accepted before him. This is the inference which Peter draws from the case of Cornelius so plainly and impressively brought before him, and seen moreover in the light of those manifestations made to him in his recent vision.

36. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)

37. That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judæa, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;

38. How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

Peter assumes that Cornelius and his friends must have heard of the gospel preaching of Jesus and also of John the Baptist—the salient points of which he briefly sketches. That it "began from Galilee" is historically accurate; that it was closely preceded by John's preaching and baptism; that God specially anointed his Son Jesus with the Holy Ghost for his gospel work; that Jesus "went about everywhere doing good:"—no words could give his life-work more truly.

39. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:

40. Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly ;

41. Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

42. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.

43. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

The staple points of every gospel sermon by Peter are here in terse but clear statement. That Jesus, risen from the dead, did not show himself indiscriminately to friend or foe—some may regard as weakening the testimony to the fact of his resurrection.—To offset any weakness which might in some cases be supposed to attach naturally to the fact that friends only were made personal eye-witnesses, let it be considered ;

(a.) The disciples to whom he did appear were previously most incredulous. They expected no such event ; they resisted the evidence of it almost or quite to the point of sinful unbelief.

(b.) The theory of collusion—to make out a case of resurrection with no fact at bottom, is utterly precluded.

(c.) No witness to his resurrection could be *competent* unless he had known him well before his death, so that he could identify him after his resurrection. Hence few if any of his enemies could have been thoroughly competent.

(d.) Yet again : The best identifying evidence such as Peter lays most stress upon here (v. 41) would be ruled out in the case of his enemies. They did not eat and drink with him after he had risen. In their case this could not be expected.

(e.) The frankness of Peter in speaking of this limitation as to the witnesses, is proof of entire honesty and simplicity in Peter and his brethren. They speak as men conscious of having truth to say and nothing but truth—as men who have not the least concern lest their testimony may be weakened by setting forth all the real facts of the case. They never once thought that the truth would need any evasion or concealment of facts on their part for its support. Such honesty and simplicity outweigh in strength far more than all the weakness incident to the friendly character of the personal witnesses.

Almost in the same breath Jesus is put before them as

the ordained Judge of all mankind, and as the Redeemer through whom salvation comes to every believer.—“Judge of *quick*”—*i. e.*, of those then *living*; and also of all who shall have previously passed from earth by death.

V. 43 seems to assume that the general strain of prophecy had taught remission of sin through the nation's Messiah. This can scarcely be shown except on that interpretation of prophecy which gives the word “Redeemer” its spiritual sense and application—one who redeems Israel not from Gentile oppression but from her bondage under sin and guilt. Prophecy being construed in this spiritual sense, it may be said truthfully that to this fact give all the prophets witness that the Messiah came to save lost souls from their sins by remission through his blood.

44. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

45. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

46. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

47. Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

48. And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

All suddenly, perhaps before Peter had said all he thought to say, the Holy Ghost fell on those Gentile hearers—God's own resistless testimony that he has no respect of persons. The circumcised Jewish converts who came with Peter were astonished! No such case had ever come to their knowledge before. But there could be no doubt that this baptism of the Holy Ghost was real, for the same proofs to the senses were there as were present in the first great Pentecost. They heard these Gentiles speak with other tongues and heard them magnify God with joyful praises.—Peter can see no reason why they should not be baptized. It was certain that God had accepted them; why should not his apostles? Why should Peter put himself against God?

As bearing (perhaps but slightly) on the question of the mode of baptism, it may be said that “forbid water” is said more pertinently of water to be brought in than of going forth to the water, and then going down into it. A river of water (*e. g.*, the Jordan) is scarcely a thing for any man to *forbid*.

It may also be noticed that Peter does not administer the rite himself. He commands—gives directions—to others to officiate. The reason in his case for abstaining from the administration may have been the same which had a like influence upon the Lord Jesus and upon Paul—viz., the danger of fostering the passion for the merely ritual and external; and lest any should glory in having been baptized by the hand of Peter, or Paul, or of Jesus himself.



CHAPTER XI.

Peter, returning to Jerusalem, is questioned as to his free association with uncircumcised Gentiles (vs. 1-3), and vindicates himself by giving them in detail the way God prepared his mind for his part and Cornelius for his, in this remarkable scene (vs. 4-14), closing with the manifest effusion of the Spirit upon them and the conviction thus wrought in his mind that he must not withstand God (vs. 15-17); to which the Jews of Jerusalem joyfully assented (v. 18);—how the gospel reaches Antioch (vs. 19-21): The church at Jerusalem send Barnabas there with the best results (vs. 22-24); who goes after Saul to assist him (vs. 25, 26); a great famine, and relief sent to the mother church by the hands of Barnabas and Saul (vs. 27-30).

1. And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

2. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,

3. Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

It was startling news, yet perhaps not sad or other than joyful—that the Gentiles—real heathen—should receive the word of God. But the attendant circumstance—that Peter had been eating with uncircumcised men—this raised one of the most grave questions!—It is not improbable that Peter had heard how they felt, or at least had anticipated it, and, therefore, hastened his return to Jerusalem to meet this excited feeling.

The word “contended” (v. 2) may be too strong, since the

Greek legitimately means—they *questioned with them*—this being the same verb in its middle voice [questioning together with] which appears in its active form (v. 12);—Go with them, raising no questions—*i. e.*, as to its propriety. The milder sense is at least admissible; and those Jerusalem Jews do not seem at this time to have had a bad spirit. See in v. 18 how readily they accepted Paul's defense and rejoiced in this new revelation of God's mercy to uncircumcised Gentiles.

4. But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying,

5. I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:

6. Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

7. And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise. Peter; slay and eat.

8. But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.

9. But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

10. And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven.

11. And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Cæsarea unto me.

12. And the spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house.

13. And he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;

14. Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

This recital is very full touching the vision of Peter; less so touching that of Cornelius—as might be expected.—In v. 12 the facts concerning the brethren that went with Peter from Joppa are made prominent, even their number, six, being given. The purpose of God (perhaps of Peter also) in their going, becomes apparent. Their testimony was of essential service.

15. And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.

16. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he

said, John indeed baptized with water ; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

17. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ ; what was I, that I could withstand God ?

18. When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

The words remembered by Peter (v. 16) are those recorded Acts 1 : 5—among the last words of the Lord before his ascension. That those primitive baptisms of the Holy Ghost were made palpable to the senses, and, therefore, were unmistakably demonstrated, is shown here to have been of vital importance. There could be no disputing or debating the fact that “ God had given to them the like gift as to us ”—the original twelve and to their one hundred and twenty associated brethren and sisters. This second pentecostal baptism upon uncircumcised Gentiles was no less positive, demonstrable, decisive, than the first upon circumcised Jews.—This was indeed a new revelation ; but it came with its own ample testimony.

Peter shows himself a master of the art of putting things :—What was I, as to being able to withstand God ? Indeed, I neither could or would do any such thing ! Happily the Jerusalem brethren, too, are joyfully satisfied and give glory to God for his salvation upon Gentiles—as they should !—Noticeably they thought of God as granting repentance unto life, and saw the proof of this gift in the fact of his effusion of his Spirit. See the same doctrine in Peter’s words (Acts 5 : 31) : “ Christ exalted to *give* repentance to Israel ”—the verb “ give ” being the same in both passages, and used in the same sense. (See Notes on 5 : 31).

19. Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

20. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians : preaching the Lord Jesus.

21. And the hand of the Lord was with them : and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

The persecution before which Stephen fell, raged so violently that the disciples—following the Lord’s direction to “ flee to another city,” went abroad as far as to Phenice

[Phenicia]—a province stretching along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean and including Tyre and Sidon; also to Cyprus, the large, well-known island off the coast of Phenicia.—Antioch, the capital of Syria, the residence of the Roman proconsul for that province, named for Antiochus, of Syrian fame, lay on the Orontes and had a large Jewish population. It became for some time the headquarters of Paul's missionary labors.—For a time these scattering disciples preached to Jews only. But at length some of them, designated as being from Cyprus and Cyrene [Northern Africa], coming to Antioch, preached Jesus to the Grecians also.—It has been in dispute whether these were Hellenists—*i. e.*, Greek speaking Jews; or, *Hellenes*—a people Grecian by nationality. The textual authorities are conflicting; but the connection here is very decisive in favor of a Grecian people. Preaching to Hellenist Jews would have made no stir at Jerusalem, and no Barnabas would have been sent to see about it.—This preaching of the gospel to a large community of heathen, uncircumcised men was a new epoch in the progress of Christianity.—The fact that God's hand of power was upon them and wrought through them so that "a great number believed and turned to the Lord" became a precious testimony that the heart of God was in this movement, and that his time had fully come to break over the ancient limitations of mercy to the covenant people and to give the gospel to the nations of the wide world.

22. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

23. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

24. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

The same interest and even excitement which the news of Peter's preaching to Cornelius had occasioned (Acts 11: 1-3) appear again over the tidings of God's work at Antioch. Very discreetly they selected that good man Barnabas to go as far as Antioch and examine into the case in their behalf. He went, and found such manifestations of the grace of God that his great, open, loving heart rejoiced exceedingly, and he exhorted them to cleave to the Lord with full and strong purpose. The case is a beautiful exemplification of the pow-

er of genuine heart-goodness to lift a man above his life-long prejudices and to help him to appreciate the true Spirit of Christ wherever he may find its presence and manifestations. So the historian accounts for the joy which this son of Christian consolation felt as he came to see and know these new converts from heathenism at Antioch. "For he was a *good man*, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." Naturally, therefore, he must love all the good men he found there. Seeing in them the manifest tokens of the Holy Ghost and of faith, his sympathetic soul must feel the pulsations of deep Christian sympathy.—Consequently "much people were added to the Lord." Such catholicity and love mightily quicken the spiritual forces that bring in souls to God.

25. Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul.

26. And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

Barnabas had known Saul at Jerusalem and had had the pleasure of introducing him to the confidence and fellowship of the disciples (Acts 9: 26, 27). It may be supposed that he knew Saul's readiness and ripeness to labor among the Gentiles—perhaps was aware that Jesus had already signified to Saul his own purpose in this matter. So he goes to Tarsus, Saul's home city, to search for him.—There for one full year (viz., the year A. D. 44), they preached continuously to the assembled people and made many disciples. Apparently it was due to the great number of their converts that they became known by a special name "*Christianoi*".—As to the origin and import of this name, the points worthy of note are—(a) Clearly the disciples did not assume this name, of their own motion, nor use it of themselves. The entire New Testament history shows this.—(b) The name appears (elsewhere than here) only in Acts (26: 28 and 1 Peter 4: 16—in both cases used by outsiders, and not in a way that implies any special respect.—(c) In its form this name comes neither from Hebrew nor from Greek etymology, but from Latin.—(d) How much of honor or of dishonor attached to it would vary with the honor accorded to the name "Christ." It suggests that they are Christ's people. The sentiments of Christendom to-day will not guide us at all in estimating the repute of that name in the age of Saul at Antioch. Since that age, the thought of the civilized world has changed

wonderfully in this one point—the honor of the Christian name.

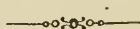
27. And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.

28. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar.

29. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea.

30. Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

A prophet coming from Jerusalem to Antioch predicted this famine, and thus prepared the way (in anticipation) for gathering supplies to be sent to Jerusalem for their relief. —“Throughout all the world,” may perhaps be said here only of their own world of Judea—it being both the Roman and the Greek usage of this phrase to apply it each to their own special “world.” To the Roman “all the world” was all his own Roman world; so to the Greek;—he never included the outside barbarian peoples. The Jews, therefore, were only following the usage of their times in giving this Judean sense to the phrase. —“Historical evidence shows a great dearth in Judea during the fourth, fifth, and sixth year of Claudius Cæsar. The historians, Josephus, Eusebius and Orosius, relate that in these years many died of famine in Jerusalem.”[Alexander.]—That the disciples “gave according to their several ability” [according as each was well to do, Gr.] was the rule of Paul (1 Cor. 16: 2,) and of Christian common sense. —This service brought Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem; but they returned ere long (Acts 12: 25).



CHAPTER XII.

Herod puts James to death and apprehends Peter (vs. 1-3); who is released from prison by an angel (vs. 4-10); Peter shows himself at the house of Mary where a prayer-meeting is in progress (vs. 11-17). Herod puts to death the keepers of his prison (vs. 18, 19); receives homage as a god for which the Lord smites him mortally (vs. 20-23). Barnabas and Saul return from Jerusalem to Antioch (vs. 24, 25).

1. Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.

2. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

3. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

To avoid confusion in identifying the several Herods of New Testament history, it is well to distinguish them by their other epithets;—the first being known as “Herod the Great” whose long reign was near its close at the birth of Jesus, and whose name goes down to infamy for the murder of the babes of Bethlehem (Matt. 2:). The second is Herod Antipas, his second son, distinguished for his murder of John the Baptist (Mark 6: 14–28); the third is this Herod Agrippa, grandson of Herod the Great, but nephew of Herod Antipas—distinguished here for the murder of the apostle James. Josephus states definitely that Herod received the sovereignty of all Palestine (*i. e.*, Judea, Samaria and Galilee) on the accession of the Roman Emperor Claudius (A. D. 41), and at his death had reigned just three years. This fixes the date of his death (as here v. 23) in A. D. 44.—Speaking of the accuracy of Luke in calling Herod “the king,” Paley remarks that “there was no portion of time for thirty years before, or ever afterwards, in which there was a king at Jerusalem, a person exercising that authority in Judea, or one to whom that title could be applied, except during the last three years of Herod’s life.”

“Put forth his hand to *vex*”—not to irritate but to persecute, sometimes even unto blood. Stephen uses this word (Acts 7: 6, 19) of the oppressions inflicted by Egypt upon Israel in their bondage.—This James, one of the earliest and most honored of the twelve, one of the two sons of Zebedee, was the first known martyr among the twelve. His brother John outlived them all. Probably James died by decapitation.—The king had no higher motive—apparently no other—than to please the Jews, for political ends. He therefore arrested Peter, with the purpose of surrendering him to the will of those who sought his life.—The time in the year is fixed—at the Passover—spoken of here to show why Herod was holding Peter in prison;—*viz.*, to surrender him to the will of the Jews as soon as this festival should have passed.

4. And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison,

and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

5. Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

6. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

7. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.

8. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

9. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

10. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

“A quaternion of soldiers” was a squad or group of four, set in this case to succeed each other on guard over Peter, each party serving three hours on duty. The night was divided into four watches of three hours each. It appears that of these four men, two slept with Peter chained between them and to them; while two others stood guard outside the prison gate. Thus the guarding of this one unarmed prisoner was made as perfect as chains, bars and locks, and soldiers set to hold the prisoner on peril of their own lives, could make it. But the Almighty had an angel to send whom no human power could withstand, and the earnest prayers of the church in behalf of Peter brought him down.

—The Greek word for “without ceasing,” means *earnest* rather than ceaseless.—With marvelous ease and facility this angel accomplished his mission, all obstacles melting away before him as of their own accord—and the work is done!

“After Easter” should have been—after the Passover festival. This Greek word—“Pascha”—is never translated “Easter” elsewhere, and never should be. The word “Easter” came into church use from a heathen source, and has no claim to recognition in the scriptures.

This strange event seemed to Peter like a dream, till he found himself actually at large, outside the prison, threading the well known streets of the city.

11. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know

of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

12. And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.

13. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.

14. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.

15. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.

16. But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.

17. But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

“Coming to himself” amounts to regaining the normal exercise of his mind and overcoming the illusion that this was a sort of vision or dream. Then he hastened to the well known house of Mary mother of John Mark (see v. 25), where he found a prayer-meeting in his behalf in progress. Their prayers were doubtless fervent and were manifestly accepted of God. Yet they did not expect God's answer just in this way—perhaps not so soon. It is no necessary part of prayer to dictate the manner of God's answer, or even to anticipate it with certainty. Hence they were not a little astonished to see Peter coming in and to hear the story of his escape.—Rhoda's words are too good to be true (thought they) for extreme excitement of joy makes men incredulous. At least they demand overwhelming evidence.

Their words (v. 15) “It is his angel”—are best explained on the theory of a common belief among the Jews (which Lightfoot traces in their history) that every individual has his guardian angel, who may assume a visible form like that of his ward. The fact (if it be one) that these brethren and sisters held this belief neither proves nor disproves it.

Peter requested them to inform James of his escape—probably because he held the chief responsibility as pastor of this mother church. Then, anticipating special search, he prudently withdrew, *i. e.*, left the city for safety.

18. Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.

19. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judæa to Cæsarea, and there abode.

“No small stir among the soldiers,” for none of them could know how the escape was made, and under Roman military law their own lives were forfeited. The command to put the keepers to death may supposably have included only the four who had him in charge at the time of his escape. If the three other groups were reasonably sagacious, they would not take their place as guards over the mere vacuum left behind Peter.

Herod went to Cæsarea for official purposes.

20. And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon; but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country.

21. And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.

22. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.

23. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

Herod had been in fighting mood (so the Greek implies) toward the cities of Tyre and Sidon, for reasons not stated. They were extremely anxious to effect a reconciliation and be on terms of peace, because those cities were quite dependent upon Palestine for their grain supply. They had always been so (see 1 Kings 5: 11, and Ezra 3: 7, and Ezek. 27: 17).

This “set day”—a very public occasion—in which Herod met the delegation from Tyre and Sidon and made a speech, is said by Josephus to have been the second day of the public games, held in honor of his patron, the Emperor Claudius.

The narrative of Josephus quite fully corroborates the more brief account given here by Luke. He says:

“On the second day of the festival, Agrippa came into the theatre. The stone seats, rising in a great semicircle, tier above tier, were covered with an excited multitude. The king came in, clothed in magnificent robes, of which silver was the costly and brilliant material. It was early in the day, and the sun's rays fell upon the king, so that the eyes of the beholders were dazzled with the brightness which surrounded him. Voices from the crowd here and there exclaimed that it was the apparition of something

divine. And when he spoke and made an oration to them, they gave a shout, saying, 'It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.' But in the midst of this idolatrous ostentation, an angel of God suddenly smote him. He was carried out of the theater a dying man, and on the sixth day he was dead."

It will be noticed that both historians concur in the place [Cæsarea]; the "set day;" the great assembly; the gorgeousness of Herod's apparel; the speech of the king; the applause of the people; and even in substance the very words of their shout; the sudden smiting by an angel of God; the sin for which this judgment from heaven was sent upon him; and finally, his speedy death. Luke does not represent his death to have been instantaneous, but rather that it was not. The coincidences, therefore, fully sustains the essential truthfulness of both accounts.

24. But the word of God grew and multiplied.

25. And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

"But," while God's enemies fall, his "word" grows, and its adherents multiply.

Barnabas and Saul had fulfilled their ministry when they had paid over the charitable collection sent through their hands from Antioch (11 : 29, 30).

This John Mark, son of Mary, seen in v. 12 above, appears in the subsequent history in Acts 13 : 5, 13 and 15 : 37-39, and also in Col. 4 : 10, and 2 Tim. 4 : 11—a nephew of Barnabas, and supposed to have written the gospel history that bears his name.

With this chapter, Luke's narrative leaves Peter and follows closely the thread of Paul's missionary life and labors, to the close of his book.



CHAPTER XIII.

Barnabas and Saul at Antioch are set apart and sent forth as missionaries (vs. 1-3); first to Cyprus, where they stop at Salamis (vs. 4, 5); next at Paphos, where they find Elymas and Sergius Paulus (vs. 6-8); Elymas smitten blind

(vs. 9-11); the missionaries next at Perga (vs. 12, 13); then at Antioch in Pisidia, where they meet the people in their synagogue (vs. 14, 15); Paul's long discourse, first ranging through Hebrew history down to David, and then to David's greater Son (vs. 16-25); how the Jews had murdered Jesus, but God had raised him to life (vs. 26-31); confirming all from the old prophets (vs. 32-37); closing with an earnest appeal, and a warning against unbelief (vs. 38-41); Gentiles desire to hear more; many believe (vs. 42, 43); the great scenes of the next Sabbath (vs. 44-49); but hostile Jews incite persecution and drive out Paul and Barnabas to Iconium (vs. 50-52).

1. Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

This church at Antioch had become strong enough to be a second missionary center, even more important for the Gentile work than Jerusalem itself. Indeed, for many reasons, Jerusalem was not the place where missions to the Gentiles would originate or be sustained.—Luke names this group of five distinguished prophets and teachers, most of them not otherwise known to us, to show that the church had some strong and good men to spare for the foreign work.—“Prophets and teachers”—all “teachers,” but not all “prophets”—the latter having a special gift of prophecy, not common to all teachers.

“Ministered to the Lord”—in the sense of being engaged in special religious services, probably with reference to the great question of missionary work for the diffusion of the gospel. As the Lord moved their souls to this earnest prayer for direction, so he answered their prayer by giving them the direction they sought—which was that they should set apart Barnabas and Saul to the work for which he was calling them. Accordingly they did so. With special prayer and fasting they laid their hands upon them and made them missionaries of Jesus.—This service should not be confounded with their ordination to the ministry. Both Barnabas and Saul had been in the gospel ministry for

years, and needed no re-ordination. But it was proper and indeed very important that they should be indorsed by this church at Antioch unto this missionary enterprise. It was foreseen by the divine Spirit (if not by themselves also) that this mission would involve the great question of the age—preaching Jesus to Gentiles with no regard to Jewish ritualities. Therefore, let this enterprise be inaugurated with the best possible evidence of being indorsed by the Holy Ghost and by this strong church at Antioch.

4. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

5. And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.

Seleucia, the first point, was the harbor city for Antioch, near the mouth of the Orontes—whence they embarked for the island of Cyprus—the native country of Barnabas (4: 36) and also of John Mark. This well known island, less than one hundred miles from the coast of Syria; in length one hundred and forty miles and in extreme breadth about fifty—was rich, and fertile, and densely peopled. We may suppose that the personal relations of Barnabas with that island directed their missionary course thither.—Salamis was an important city in the south-east quarter of the island.—The word “synagogues” (plural) assumes a somewhat large Jewish population, since, for a small population there should be but one. In confirmation of their great numbers, it is recorded in Roman history (Dio Cassius) that in A. D. 116, under Trajan, the Jews rose and massacred two hundred and forty thousand Greek inhabitants—for which outrage Hadrian soon after expelled them from the island.

In what precise sense John served as their minister [*servant*]*—i. e.*, the minister, not of the Jewish synagogues, but of Barnabas and Saul, is not entirely clear, certainly as their attendant and helper; but whether mainly in things spiritual can not be positively determined from this brief allusion.—The historian notices his presence with the apostles, and soon (v. 13) refers to him again.

Of the immediate results of their labors in Salamis nothing is known.

6. And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus:

7. Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

8. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

Paphos, their next important point—on the extreme western end of the island, was the residence of the Roman proconsul ["deputy"] by the name of Sergius Paulus—"a prudent man"—*i. e.*, a man of intelligence and good understanding.—Critics notice here the remarkable accuracy of Luke in calling Sergius a proconsul, inasmuch as the numerous provinces of the great Roman Empire were classified variously, one part being assigned to the Roman senate, and another part retained under the immediate supervision of the emperor. Only the former had proconsuls. So nice was this distinction that even some of the Roman historians have become confused and made blunders; but no historic inaccuracy is ever found in Luke.

Another prominent personage here was a certain sorcerer, a magos [magician]—"a false prophet" in the sense of a deceptive fortune-teller. His Jewish name was Barjesus, and his professional name Elymas, which, derived from the Arabic, signifies sagacious, discerning—a man claiming to be versed in occult magic science. He belonged to the same class with that Simon Magus whom Philip and Peter encountered at Samaria (Acts 8). This man had been intimate with Sergius Paulus, and now labors to withstand his reception of the gospel faith.

9. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

10. And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11. And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

12. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

In the face of this opposition, Paul is moved by the Spirit of God to rebuke this wicked sorcerer and to declare to him that God's hand is against him and will smite him blind—which was done immediately. The miserable sorcerer gropes about to find some one to lead him by the hand.—This

miracle impressed the deputy profoundly and brought him to embrace the gospel at once.

In v. 9, the historian remarks that Saul is also called Paul. From this point he uses this new name invariably. Various reasons for this change of name have been assigned; *e. g.*, that he took it in honor of this Sergius Paulus; or that the name, being in its origin Latin while Saul is Hebrew, became more appropriate from this time forward. The question has only secondary importance. Perhaps the most probable reason is that he is passing out from his old Hebrew life and associations into the broader life of the Roman, Gentile world, and therefore assumes the name significant of this change.

13. Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.

From this point onward Paul (not Barnabas) leads the mission. It is "Paul and *those with him*." So long as they were in Cyprus, the native country of Barnabas, there were special reasons for his being prominent, besides his greater age and his longer Christian ministry. But now they are launching out upon the great theater of the mission world of that age, and Paul is the moving spirit.

Leaving the island of Cyprus, they strike the continent at Perga in the province of Pamphylia. This province lies west of Cilicia. Perga on the river Cestrus, then an important city and harbor, devoted to the worship of Diana, seems not to have detained them long—perhaps because their arduous mission into the interior, up the mountain fastnesses, could best be prosecuted just at that season.

An event of far-reaching consequences is only named now;—viz., that John Mark, nephew of Barnabas, thus far "their minister" (v. 5) left them here and "returned to Jerusalem." Paul was greatly dissatisfied, as we shall see (Acts 15: 36-40). What induced John to leave them there is not said or even hinted; whether his courage were unequal to the arduous journey and the unknown hardships of that untried region; or whether his feelings were hurt by Paul's taking the leadership and throwing his honored uncle into the subordinate relation, we are left to conjecture. Probably one or both of these influences had weight.

14. But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch

in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and sat down.

15. And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

We must think of them here as up in the high lands of the interior, past the lofty and rough ranges of the Taurus mountains, breaking ground where the gospel had never been heard before.—This Antioch in Pisidia, always to be broadly distinguished from Antioch of Syria where they were set apart to this mission, was an important city then, though now identified only in its ruins. Here were Jews and a synagogue, ever to be remembered for this great sermon by Paul—which we may supposably take as a specimen of his frequent discourses in Jewish synagogues. The reader will notice its points of close analogy with the discourse of Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).—What special introduction to these Jews or to this synagogue they may have had is not indicated;—possibly none except that they were educated Jews, thoroughly familiar with the synagogue, coming in upon the footing of the civilities usually accorded to Jewish brethren from abroad entering their recognized fraternity. It may be supposed that they sat down in seats reserved for Jewish travelers who sought an introduction among their brethren.—After the customary reading—part from the law and part from the prophets—they were cordially invited to address the congregation.

16. Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.

17. The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it.

18. And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.

19. And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan, he divided their land to them by lot.

20. And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years until Samuel the prophet.

21. And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

These salient points of their forefathers' history are touched, not perhaps because of any special bearing upon the gospel scheme; but rather as a pleasant introduction,

well adapted to conciliate their kind regard; to impress them with Paul's profound acquaintance with their nation's history, and so to open their ears and hearts to the vital points of his gospel message.—For the chronological points in v. 20—the period between the death of Moses and the inauguration of King Saul, the reader is referred to my “Pentateuch,” (p. 60) and to my “Heb. History,” (p. 91).

22. And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will.

23. Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus:

24. When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

25. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose.

From King David to the greater King Messiah, the transition was easy. The high religious character of David—a man who, contrasted with Saul, was after God's own heart, coupled with his achievements as king in Israel, served to make him prominent as one of the most distinguished ancestors of the Messiah, who, in a higher sense than David, became the Savior of Israel.—A brief reference to John the Baptist's testimony fills out this introduction of Jesus of Nazareth to their thought and regard. The Jews for the most part recognized John as a prophet, (see Matt. 21: 25): “For all hold John as a prophet.” This both accounts for and justifies this decisive appeal to his testimony to Jesus of Nazareth.—In the clause—“I am not *he*,” the Greek has no pronoun for “he;” but the subject of remark could not be mistaken.

26. Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

27. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.

28. And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.

29. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.

30. But God raised him from the dead:

31. And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.

These introductory points having fully prepared the minds of his audience, Paul comes to his direct appeal and makes it with admirable skill.—All ye children of the stock of Abraham; honored heirs of that old covenant and of all its promises; and especially those among you that fear God;—to you is this word, freighted with salvation, sent. How many or how few there might be among them who feared God, he knew not; but it was pertinent to suggest that this message was specially for them that they might give it earnest heed as bringing a word from God to their waiting souls.

Observe, Paul does not charge these Jews in general (as Peter did at Jerusalem) with having been personally concerned in the persecution, condemnation and crucifixion of Jesus. He says only—Your brethren at Jerusalem and their rulers, not recognizing Jesus as their Messiah revealed in all the old prophets, fulfilled those prophecies by putting him to death. Paul forbore to bring out in its strongest form the malice and guilt of those Jews who murdered Jesus. He only says—They knew not Jesus nor the old prophecies which revealed him; and moreover, found no worthy cause of death in him; yet demanded of Pilate his death.—Then Christ's resurrection and the personal testimony of living witnesses in proof of it came next in order—vital points in a gospel appeal.

32. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,

33. God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

34. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

35. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

36. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

37. But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

Compared with Peter in his great sermon, Paul passes very briefly the testimony of the living witnesses to the resurrection—men unknown to his audience at Antioch; but returns

to the testimony from prophecy which they had read and heard all their lives. That those ancient promises had been in general fulfilled to them in raising Jesus from the dead, Paul proves by citing three distinct passages,—the first being from Ps. 2. In this passage Paul takes the words—“Thou art my Son; this day I have begotten thee”—in the sense; I have publicly, before all heaven, recognized thee as my Son by raising thee from the dead and exalting thee to sit at my right hand. In the highest and the only complete and full sense, this resurrection and exaltation of Jesus made and showed him to be God’s recognized Son. The verb “*made*” has essentially a declarative sense. For this declarative force of the resurrection, see Rom. 1: 4.

The two remaining proofs-texts for the Messiahship of the risen Jesus bear specially to the point that he has not only risen, but risen to die no more—risen to an immortal and glorious reign in the heavens.—These are (a) Isa. 55: 3: “I will give you the sure mercies of David”—the great mercy made sure to David. In the great promises made to David (2 Sam. 7: 12–29 and 1 Chron. 17: 7–27; restated substantially Ps. 89: 1–4, 19–37 and referred to 2 Sam. 23: 1–5) the central and emphatic point was—a distinguished Son whose reign should be indefinitely long, and the blessings coming through him consequently, not only great but *sure*. These prophecies were in proof here because their strong point—enduring certainty and security—involved the resurrection of Jesus and his ensuing exaltation to glory. They could in no manner be made forever sure and faithful except by this endorsement—this ensealing of the covenant by the Infinite Father. So Paul argues at length (1 Cor. 15: 13–20). If no resurrection of Jesus, then no reliable salvation—no testimony that God accepts Jesus as at once his Son and his provided and proffered Redeemer for a lost world.

The remaining proof-text (the same upon which Peter rests, Acts 2: 25–32) is Ps. 16: 10: “Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” Interpreting this prophecy, Paul assumes that if it cannot refer to David, it must refer to Christ. But it can not refer to David because under such reference it could not be true. David died as other men die and his body hastened to corruption. Therefore the words must refer to Christ, and being so referred, must prove his resurrection.—David served his generation nobly—a blessing to his people, lifting the nation above the oppressions of foreign foes and re-establishing religious worship

with greatly enhanced spiritual power. Having finished his great life-work, he was gathered to his fathers—not merely to their dead ashes but to their glorified souls in paradise. Yet his body fell under the primal decree—"Ashes to ashes, dust to dust."—But of Christ the testimony is explicit—He saw no corruption in the grave.

38. Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

39. And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

40. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets;

41. Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

This is genuine gospel preaching, announcing remission of sins through this One Jesus Christ. Whosoever believeth in him is justified from all sins—a thing impossible under the law of Moses. Paul can not mean that the law of Moses avails to justify from *some* sins but not from all; and that Christ comes in to supplement that deficiency and secure justification for the balance not provided for by Moses. Such a sense is entirely inadmissible under the Gospel of Christ Jesus. Therefore we must interpret as above:—By Jesus ye may be justified from *all sin*—this complete justification being impossible under Moses, because by no means provided for under his system.

Paul knew well the human heart in general and the heart of a Jew in particular, and therefore, having presented the great gospel truth—proffered remission—he implores his hearers not to forfeit this priceless blessing through unbelief. Beware lest that doom befall you of which the prophets have spoken (*e. g.*, Hab. 1: 5): "Behold, ye despisers; then wonder with mingled surprise and incredulity—and so rush upon your destruction!" The third imperative (the word "perish") is not a command, nor even an exhortation; but a prediction, swiftly to be fulfilled—the clause having this sense:—Behold, ye who in heart despise, and look on with wondering but stupid and unmoved astonishment. So shall ye meet the doom ye so richly deserve!—For I am working a work in your days (in bringing the Chaldean hosts upon your land)—which ye will not believe beforehand, though the prophets foretell it. Insensible to your nation's guilt, ye are blind to your danger, and therefore

will not believe that the judgments foretold by your prophets must surely come. Paul implores his hearers to shun such guilty infatuation and consequent unbelief.

42. And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.

43. Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

The public services having closed, the Jews were the first to leave. The Gentile hearers lingering behind, besought the apostles to speak again on the next Sabbath.—As the fruit of this first sermon, many Jews and proselytes became disciples, and sought further instruction.

44. And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

45. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

46. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

47. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

By the next Sabbath the whole city was thoroughly aroused: Gentiles in great numbers thronged their assembly. Probably the synagogue proved too small, so that the meeting was held elsewhere—a fact which served, perhaps, to stir up the envious spirit of the Jews.—Their opposition became defiant; yet Paul and Barnabas, not only undaunted, but the more bold, said to them plainly:—We have fulfilled our great commission in giving you the first offers of salvation through your nation's own Messiah. But since ye refuse it—repel it—and thus show yourselves to be unworthy of this everlasting life, lo, we leave you, and turn to the Gentiles.—For this course, Paul finds authority in the prophecies of Isaiah (49: 6), which declare that Jehovah “had ordained his servant, the Messiah, to be a light to the Gentiles and the author of salvation to the very ends of the earth.”—This reference to Isaiah is a fact fraught with momentous doctrinal results, proving conclusively—(a.) That Isaiah's predictions of salvation to the Gentiles were held by Paul to be

his authority for preaching the gospel to the Gentile world;—and (b.) That those glowing predictions which so certainly grasp in their comprehensiveness the conversion of *the world to Christ*—of all the nations—even of all the ends of the earth—must *refer to the Christian age*—to the age of Paul; and not to some yet future dispensation, other than that in which Paul was moving. The doctrine of the pre-millennial advent, which dwarfs the Christian dispensation as virtually powerless to convert the world, and as never designed to be any thing more than a second John Baptist precursor of yet another system not yet opened, but coming soon:—this whole version of prophecy and of gospel power is foreign from Paul and Isaiah—makes up a scheme of doctrine utterly unknown to Isaiah and never held or acted on by Paul.

No reader should overlook the underlying assumption (in the last clause of v. 46), that all may have salvation in Christ who will; that none who hear the gospel are lost but those who judge themselves unworthy to be saved—*i. e.*, who make it impossible for God to save them under a scheme of salvation, free to every moral agent's acceptance or rejection.

48. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

49. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

The Gentiles were glad—not (we may hope) because the Jews had adjudged themselves unworthy of salvation, but because themselves were made welcome to all its blessings.

The last clause of v. 48—“As many as were ordained to eternal life believed,” standing in this close connection with v. 46, suggests that God's purpose and man's free agency run side by side, co-working and inter-working in their agencies, neither conflicting with the other. The men *not* “ordained to eternal life” are so because they adjudged themselves unworthy. They ruled themselves out from the pale of freely offered gospel blessings.

The moral power of this great central city traveled outwards over the adjacent region—a significant illustration of the wisdom of the apostles in seizing the great cities and holding them for Christ as great strategic points in their warfare.

50. But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women,

and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

51. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

52. And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

It was shrewd policy in those persecuting Jews to array against the apostles the better and higher classes of society (Jews, of course) and bring them in to back up this reign of mob law.—“Shaking off the dust of their feet against them” was according to Christ’s direction (Matt. 10: 14 and Luke 9: 5).—Iconium was their next city, forty-five miles south-east from Antioch, and the chief city of Lycaonia. It is still a city of some importance, under the name Konieh, though fallen far below its ancient rank and population.—The disciples left behind, were strong in the Lord, despite of the fierce persecution which drove the apostles away.



CHAPTER XIV.

The chief localities of this chapter are Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. Its events fill out the latter part of Paul’s first great missionary tour, bringing him back to their starting point—the Syrian Antioch.

1. And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.

As usual they began at the synagogue, in harmony with the original commission from their risen Lord—“Beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24: 47). “It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken unto you” (13: 46). Yet Greeks—real Gentiles—were in attendance also—a circumstance which greatly facilitated the progress of their work. Apparently this attendance of Gentiles at the Jewish synagogues was more free and more common in localities remote from Jerusalem than in Judea.—The effectiveness of their preaching is put in briefest form, the word “so” being emphatic. They spake *so*—so earnestly, with such convincing logic, with such power of the Holy Ghost attend-

ing—that a great multitude of both Jews and Greeks believed. Those were days of the right hand of the risen Savior's power.

2. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.

3. Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

Here again, unbelieving Jews are the pestiferous element—envious, jealous, malign. Here also as at Antioch, (13: 50) they artfully work upon other parties (in this case the Gentiles) to disaffect them toward the apostles. To *evil-affect* the mind is in the sense of, to prejudice, embitter, exasperate. Yet none the less for this but even the more did the apostles hold on and preach with the greater boldness—this being involved in the word “therefore.” Because of this opposition they labored the more intensely and with the more persistent perseverance; and the Lord mightily indorsed their work by miraculous attestations.

4. But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

5. And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,

6. They were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about:

7. And there they preached the gospel.

The whole city was moved, every man throwing himself upon one side or the other; the opposition headed by the civil authorities becoming desperate. The rush of mob violence is expressed in the word “assault,” having for its purpose to stone the apostles. Fortunately they were apprized of their danger in season to make their escape.—In recounting his perils (2 Cor. 11: 25) Paul says very definitely—“Once was I stoned.” The record of this one case stands below (v. 19). He does not say how many times he escaped stoning by a hair's breadth. His letters are corroborated by Luke's history.

Of these cities, Lystra and Derbe, the precise location is yet undetermined. They were prominent cities of Lycaonia, a province lying between Cilicia on its south and Cappadocia and Galatia on its north.

8. And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked:

9. The same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,

10. Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

Two events give prominence to their work at Lystra; the healing of a life-long cripple, very analogous to the miracle wrought by Peter (Acts 3:); and the consequent rising of the people to worship them as gods come down among men.

This cripple heard Paul preach. Paul's quick, sharp eye detected his attention, his interest and his manifest faith. These conditions precedent to a miracle being present, Paul, moved by the Spirit, addressed him with loud voice;—"Stand upright upon thy feet." Instantly he leaped and began to walk. According to Luke's words the leaping was done once—was one act; the walking continued indefinitely.

11, And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The Gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

12. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker.

13. Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

This was a spontaneous movement of the common people. Luke notes specially that in their outcry they used the common dialect of the place—something other than the Greek which the apostles used. This shows why the apostles were not aware what was on foot until they heard of it (v. 14), far along in its progress.—The people said in their heart—None but the gods can do such things. These men must be gods come among us in human form. Jupiter was one of the patron gods of their city. Their mythology made Mercury his attendant, distinguished as the god of eloquence. Paul answered well, therefore, to Mercury. Barnabas remained to represent Jupiter. No special reason is hinted for giving him this higher honor.

In v. 13, the translation—"The priest of Jupiter which was before their city"—is liable to mislead, since it was not Jupiter, but his image or statue which stood before—in front of—their city gates. This shows also why the sacrificial offering of oxen, decked with garlands, was to take place just outside of the city. This position of their tutelar deity, without the gates, is shown in classic history to have been usual.—It is not entirely clear whether they in-

tended to have the apostles themselves personally present at this usual place of Jupiter's worship. Without bringing them to the spot, they might have offered these sacrifices before Jupiter's image with the avowed purpose of homage to him for sending these representatives down among them.

14. Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

15. And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein :

16. Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

17. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

18. And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

As soon as the apostles became aware of this movement they rushed to the spot, rending their garments—the oriental manifestation of grief and horror—crying out—We are nothing but men like yourselves—mere common men—not gods.—The word, “passions,” is liable to be taken in a sense too narrow—not to say too low; for their meaning was—men of the same nature, the same constitution, mental and physical, and, therefore, the same wants and weaknesses.—“We preach unto you the glad tidings” [evangelize] that ye should turn from these “vanities,” mere nothings [*e. g.*, Jupiter, Mercury] unto the living God—the only Being worthy of our worship. Their message is an *evangel*, and not a mere proclamation or command, because it bears within itself the word of mercy—the glad tidings of remission of sin to the penitent and believing.

The true and living God is known by his works of creation and of providence also. The God ye should worship (and no other) is He who made the heavens, the earth, and all things in it. This is the doctrine of scripture everywhere, and of reason no less.

“Suffered” all nations to walk as they would—must not be construed as his permission, or as implying that he left them with no testimony to his being God, their own Maker and Benefactor. The statement should be taken in a relative, comparative sense, meaning that, compared with the present more full revelation of himself, he had left them

with feebler light and with manifestations of himself less clear and palpable.—“Times past,” is more precisely—“in past generations.”—In v. 17, they proceed to qualify their statements yet more. Yet he did not leave himself without witness even in those darkest ages; for even then he was always the Benefactor of men, doing them good: giving *you* (so the better text) the rains of heaven and the fruits of the earth. Filling your bodies with food and your hearts with gladness—the food really going to the body, and the joy to the heart.—It was only with extreme labor that these strong arguments availed to stay them from offering sacrifice to the apostles as to gods.

19. And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

20. Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

Again the same hostile persecutors are dogging their steps. Here they succeed in exciting a mob against the apostles and in stoning Paul whom they dragged out of their city, supposing him dead.—Was it by miracle (so it would seem) that after the disciples gathered about him, he rose up, came into the city, and was ready next day to leave with Barnabas for Derbe?

21. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,

22. Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

23. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

Derbe differs from the cities previously visited in the point of no persecution. Their labors were greatly blessed.—Soon turning back upon their course, they revisit Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, apparently without further molestation.—“Confirming the souls of the disciples”—not by administering any certain rite of so-called “confirmation”—a thing utterly foreign from the spiritual nature of the primitive gospel;—but by preaching a sustaining salvation, exhorting them to be steadfast in their faith and to endure

with true moral heroism whatever tribulation might fall to their lot—this being one of the inevitable conditions of entering God's kingdom.

Upon this second visit, these churches had acquired some maturity; the first converts had been developed and tried sufficiently to test in some degree their capabilities for responsible service; and moreover, as the churches must now be thrown upon themselves for instruction and order it became vital to have church officers set apart for both teaching and general supervision. This work is described briefly in v. 23.

The advocates and the opponents of Episcopacy have long been in controversy over this passage—the point in issue being whether the choice of these “elders” was made by the apostles or by the churches.

My plan of commentary permits only the briefest presentation of such points as seem to me beyond reasonable question.

(a.) That elders (“presbuteroi”)—and “bishops” [episcopoi] were in that primitive age, convertible terms, used interchangeably—neither having any prerogatives above the other. “Elder” [presbuteros] is of Jewish etymology and antecedents; “bishop” [episcopos] is in these respects Greek. That they are convertible see Tit. 1: 5–7 and Acts 20: 17–28.

(b.) The Greek word for “ordained” can not be held closely to its primary sense as given by its etymology, viz.: to vote into office by the uplifted hand—because the persons who in this case perform this act are Paul and Barnabas; and they can scarcely be supposed to have gone through the ceremony of voting in these elders by show of their own hands. The secondary sense—appoint or constitute—must therefore be adopted here under the force of circumstances.

(c.) In certain other known cases, the apostolic usage of throwing upon the Christian brotherhood the selection of their representative officers, strongly favors the conclusion that in this case they took the sense of the brethren and followed in the main their choice in this ordaining of elders.—The cases that are clear are—the selection of deacons (Acts 6:) and of the custodians of charity funds, raised at Corinth (2 Cor. 8: 19), where we find the same verb for “chosen” as here.

(d.) The same good sense which would lead the apostles

to throw the responsibility of choice upon the brotherhood wherever the number of brethren and their capabilities for self-government seemed to warrant it, would equally dictate the exercise of their own judgment and control wherever the churches were too immature to bear this responsibility wisely and well. Apostolic example and precedent should always be estimated in the light of their surroundings. The principles upon which they manifestly acted are of vastly more consequence to us as authority than the definite things they may be supposed to have done, especially when the precise circumstances in a given case can not be certainly known.

To ordain with fasting and prayer and to commend to the Lord for his special help and his ever-guiding hand, are always in order, and should never be suffered to lapse from the spirit into a barren formality.

24. And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

25. And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia:

26. And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled.

27. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

28. And there they abode long time with the disciples.

Returning, they made a longer stay at Perga than before, the results of which, however, are not recorded. Having come back to Antioch of Syria, from which they went forth (13: 1-4), they completed their first great missionary tour and made a full and most encouraging report of their labors. —“Of all that God had done *with them*”—in the sense of using them in his service and saving men from their sins by his own spiritual power, working in co-operation with their labors.

In v. 28, “the long time” which they spent at Antioch can not be determined precisely, but must be estimated proximately. It is reasonably certain that they set forth upon this first missionary tour in A. D. 45, and that the council at Jerusalem (as in chap. 15) was in A. D. 50. The five intervening years are to be divided, perhaps about equally, between this tour of missionary service and the period here referred to of time spent in and about Antioch.

CHAPTER XV.

This chapter records the great consultation at Jerusalem over the question of requiring Gentile converts to be circumcised;—first, the occasion which made it advisable (v. 1); the mission of Barnabas and Paul to Jerusalem to consult the brethren there (vs. 2-6); the remarks of Peter (v. 7-11); the hearing of Barnabas and Paul (v. 12); the remarks of James (vs. 13-21); the decision to send a delegation and a written statement of their opinions (vs. 22-29). The delegation proceeded to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas (vs. 30-35). Paul proposes to Barnabas a second missionary tour—in view of which they disagree on the question of taking with them John Mark—and the result (vs. 36-41).

1. And certain men which came down from Judæa taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye can not be saved.

The great issue of the apostolic age—the question of questions, more vital by far than any other—came to its decision in this chapter. The point was not precisely whether Gentiles might have the gospel preached to them; but whether they could be saved *without being circumcised*. Must they become virtually Jews, and reach their salvation through the rites and ceremonies of Judaism? So those men who came down from Jerusalem to Antioch taught the Gentile brethren there.

No greater, no more vital issue than this, can well be conceived. To appreciate its magnitude we need to consider—(1.) That the whole people of Israel had practiced circumcision since the days of Abraham; had gloried in it as their distinctive national prerogative and honor; had been accustomed to think of it as the seal and stamp of the God of their fathers, designating them as his chosen and accepted people.—(2.) Circumcision carried with it all the Mosaic institutions—all that was imposing, grand and national in their ritual system and in their temple worship. Consequently the whole question had entrenched itself in the strongest affections of their Jewish nature and in the hallowed associations of all the historic past.—(3.) To impose circumcision upon Gentile converts as a necessity for their salvation must almost inevitably subvert the gospel system. This gospel system said—Salvation to all who repent of their

sins and receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior; nothing else is or can be of vital necessity but this. The gospel system, therefore, provides no place for circumcision as a necessary condition of salvation. Circumcision can not be held as an absolute necessity without perverting all just notions of the heart-change upon which salvation really and necessarily hinges.

2. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

Paul and Barnabas took a firm stand against them. Earnest and long protracted discussion having proved to be unavailing, it was determined by the brethren to send a delegation, including Paul and Barnabas, up to Jerusalem to lay the whole case before the apostles and elders there. The profound wisdom of this plan was of the Lord.

3. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

4. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

5. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

6. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

On their way the two apostles improve their opportunity to report to brethren the conversion of Gentiles under their missionary labors, to their great joy.—Arriving at Jerusalem they meet a cordial welcome. Here again they report their missionary labors and success.—In Paul's Epistle to the Galatians (2: 2) he states that in addition to these more public reports, he had private personal conferences with some of the leading brethren there to bring the merits of the question more fully before them and to ensure a just decision.

Here again certain men of the Pharisees who had professed to receive Jesus Christ rose up, maintaining the same doctrine held by the parties who stirred up such discussion at Antioch. The Gentile converts (they said) *must* be circumcised and commanded to keep the law of Moses. Lifelong Pharisees before their conversion to Christ, they were

Pharisaic formalists in their Christianity. They seem to have been unable to receive the gospel of Christ in its simplicity. They could not emancipate themselves from the bondage of convictions and notions bred into their Pharisaic bones from their very birth.

So the apostles and elders convene for a general and full consultation on this great question.

7. And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

8. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;

9. And he put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

10. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

11. But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

After a very free discussion, giving the Pharisees (probably) a wide range of debate, it was eminently appropriate that Peter should be heard.——It was very suggestive to speak of God as knowing the hearts of those Gentile converts perfectly. This allusion quietly assumed that a right heart was altogether the vital thing; that if the heart were right all the rest was of the least possible consequence.——Notice, moreover, the witnessing testimony which God could and did give of his acceptance of their hearts, by means of these visibly manifest gifts of his Spirit. Peter said God gave to them the same Holy Ghost as to us; and it meant the same thing for them as for ourselves. God purified their hearts by their faith as he does ours.

“Why tempt ye God?” Men are said to “tempt God” when they abuse his mercy and his compassion—*e. g.*, when they bring a needless strain upon his grace by subjecting his children to gratuitous trial and temptation. The idea is not precisely that of tempting God to sin, but rather of grieving his sympathizing heart by imposing cruel inconsiderate burdens upon his feeble children.—This “yoke on the neck” is called (v. 28) a “greater burden,” and by Paul (Gal. 5: 1) “the yoke of bondage.” The grind of this yoke upon the neck became intolerable, not so much by the multiplicity of its prescribed forms and ceremonies, or by their being laborious and costly, as by their tremendous strain up-

on the conscience when they were held to be essential to personal salvation. This, it should be noticed, was the central point in this great discussion—the absolute *need be* of circumcision as *that which saves*. “Except ye be circumcised, ye *can not be saved*.”

This, Peter says, (v. 11) is by no means our gospel system of faith in Jesus Christ. We believe that we are saved through the grace of our Lord Jesus—we and they both; all alike;—they as well as we. Why then should we virtually nullify our doctrine of salvation through faith alone, by foisting this alien element into our system and neutralizing the truth of the gospel by this great falsehood?

12. Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

At this point the debate is arrested and opportunity given for Paul and Barnabas to make their great missionary report of labors among the Gentiles.—This was an open council, in the presence of a mass of eager listeners; but to their credit, be it said, they listened well to the Gentile missionaries.

13. And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:

14. Simon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

15. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

16. After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

17. That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

18. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

This James who makes the concluding speech before the council, held a high position in the church at Jerusalem, traces of which appear in Acts 12: 17;—where Peter, just out of prison, said—“Go show these things unto *James* and to the brethren.” Also in Acts 21: 18—where Paul, visiting Jerusalem after years of absence, his historian writes—“The day following, Paul went in with us unto James, and all the elders were present”—this James manifestly at their head.—Paul (Gal. 2: 9) speaks of the leading men in this

council thus: "When James, Cephas [Peter] and John who seemed to be pillars" etc.—but of these "pillars" James stands first.

James refers respectfully to the speech of Simon [Peter], and then quotes from the prophecy of Amos (9: 11, 12) to show that in God's plan, "the residue of men" (all others than Jews, even all the Gentile nations) "should seek the Lord." This was to be in the gospel age God's method of building up the fallen, dilapidated tent of David.—It should be noticed that David's throne and kingdom represent that of his greater Son Jesus; that in the time of this prophet Amos, his royal palace, shorn of much of its glory, is but a "tent," and even that in a sadly shattered state; but God's promise runs to rebuild it in far greater glory and with marvelous enlargement; that all the rest of men, even the Gentile nations, should come in, bringing their glory, riches and honor unto it. This strain of representation is common in Isaiah, and often rises to sublime magnificence and grandeur. (See Isaiah 49 and 60).—In v. 17 (last clause) and v. 18 the better textual authorities sustain this reading;—"Saith the Lord, who making these things known from the beginning."

It deserves remark that this citation of prophecy from Amos bears upon the great question then pending, with a twofold force, inasmuch as it shows—(a.) That God's thought and plan from the very beginning included the ingathering of the Gentiles as the grand means of rebuilding and glorifying the kingdom of David's anointed Son:— and (b.) That those prophecies were totally silent as to imposing circumcision upon these Gentile converts. Therefore, to impose it is unauthorized and gratuitous.

19. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

20. But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

21. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

The words—"My sentence is"—will mislead us if we think of them as signifying an autocratic decree—an assumption of the supreme power of the council. Subsequent statements forbid this sense (see vs. 22, 25). The word used by James means only—I give it as my opinion; this is my personal judgment upon the question before us. It is that

we do not "*trouble*"—in the sense of burden with Jewish ritualism (circumcision and its associated rites), those from among the Gentiles who turn to God.—In v. 20 he names the points he does think it important to enjoin. These were essentially adopted by the council and were brought into their written result (vs. 28, 29).

"Pollutions of idols" [in the written document "meats offered to idols;"] refer not precisely to the direct worship of idols, for this, as Christian converts they had utterly renounced, but to the use of meats which had been offered to idols—the same question which Paul discussed in 1 Cor. 10: 19–38.—That "fornication," an offense of moral character, should be classed here with three other things that are ceremonial, has been thought strange; yet needs no other explanation or justification save this, that the morals of the heathen world had sunk so low that fornication was scarcely recognized as sin. No specification of Christian duties, therefore, could omit it wisely.—"Things strangled," the Mosaic law forbade because the blood was not in this case removed. The prohibition of blood as food was extremely rigid, the more so, we may presume because its use was very common among the heathen.

In v. 21 the matters of fact are entirely obvious; but the logical connection, indicated by "*for*" should have attention. I suggest that it may be thus:—It is wise to enjoin upon Gentile converts these four things—*for* these things are kept so constantly fresh in the thought of their Jewish brethren by hearing the law read every Sabbath, and have moreover in themselves so much intrinsic propriety and weight, that, for both reasons, they should certainly abstain.—As to all else embraced in the Mosaic system let them bear themselves considerately toward their Jewish brethren, not giving offense needlessly, not making a display of their own exemption from burdensome ceremonies, nor taunting them for their conscientious scruples.—In such points of view, this suggested word of admonition is beautifully Christian.

22. Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

23. And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia:

24. For as much as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law : to whom we gave no such commandment :

25. It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

26. Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

27. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.

28. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things ;

29. That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication ; from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

It was decided to send a delegation.—Of these two men, Judas is not otherwise known. Silas became Paul's fellow-missionary and appears often in subsequent history ;—in the epistles always under his Latin name, Silvanus.

With these brethren they send their decision in writing. Noticeably they disclaim all responsibility for those Pharisaic men who went to Antioch to preach the necessity of circumcision. They strongly commend the brethren, Barnabas and Paul as “ our beloved,” and as men whose hazarding of life for the name of Jesus should insure them our high esteem, and grateful regard.—Notice also how confidently they assume that this decree is the mind of the Holy Ghost as well as their own :—“ It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.” They knew that the Holy Ghost had indorsed these Gentile brethren by his miraculous gifts and his unquestionable baptisms of power, without their being circumcised and without their adhesion to all the ritualities of Moses.

30. So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch : and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle :

31. Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.

32. And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.

33. And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles :

34. Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still.

35. Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

The work of the council being finished, the delegation and also the missionary apostles hasten back to Antioch and make glad the Gentile brethren there by their report of this wise decision.—Silas remains, and henceforward identifies himself with the mission work of these Gentile apostles.

36. And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.

37. And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.

38. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.

39. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus:

40. And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.

41. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

The profound wisdom of Paul appears in his sense of the importance of revisiting the scenes of former labor, to look after his converts, to confirm their hearts in the faith, and to nip in the bud any erratic tendencies.

Barnabas does not doubt the wisdom of this proposed second tour; but (for reasons, perhaps, of a personal nature) he *wished* (better than “determined”)—he had a *desire* to take with them his nephew, John Mark.—Paul thought it not good to take him. He had left them at Pamphylia (Acts 13: 13) and gone back to Jerusalem. His reasons for this step are not hinted at at all. We know only that they did not satisfy Paul, while Barnabas would gladly take him notwithstanding. They differed decidedly in judgment. Perhaps there were some elements of personal feeling in the case. So they separated. Barnabas, taking Mark, went to their former country, Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas for his missionary associate.

Paul's disapproval of Mark's course at Pamphylia, did not result in permanent alienation and loss of Christian confidence, for in later life, he spoke of him, not only with kindness, but with high appreciation. Thus (Col. 4: 10): —“If Mark, sister's son to Barnabas, come unto you, receive him.” (2 Tim. 4: 11), “Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is profitable to me for the ministry.”

Of the planting of these churches in Syria and Cilicia, we have no specific history; but we know that Paul spent considerable time at Antioch, the capital of Syria, and also at Tarsus, the chief city of Cilicia. We have only to assume that holding these cities as strategic points, he threw his influence outward into adjacent districts and founded churches there. This was the missionary policy of the age—to hold the great cities firmly, and then strike out into the adjacent villages and country as the way might open.



CHAPTER XVI

Timothy appears first at Lystra, and becomes associated with Paul (vs. 1-3); they traverse Phrygia and Galatia, but are shut off from Asia and Bithynia (vs. 4-7); at Troas they are summoned over into Macedonia (vs. 8-10); come to Philippi (vs. 11, 12); conversion of Lydia (vs. 13-15); a soothsaying damsel exorcised (vs. 16-18); the consequent mob, scourging and imprisonment (vs. 19-24); Paul and Silas in prison (vs. 25-27); the jailer converted (vs. 28-34); the prisoners having been released, depart from the city (vs. 35-40).

1. Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek.

2. Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

3. Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

On this second tour, the great event at Lystra was the accession of Timothy to the missionary group. Paul would remember Lystra as the spot where on his first tour he was stoned and dragged out of the city as one dead (14: 19, 20). It is more than probable that Timothy was one of his converts at that time, some four years before this second visit. During this time his Christian character had developed well; the brethren at Lystra and Iconium spoke highly of him;

his maternal ancestry was thoroughly religious, his mother, Lois, and grandmother, Eunice, godly women of unfeigned faith, having trained him in the holy scriptures from his childhood (2 Tim. 1: 5 and 3: 14, 15). The historian relates, incidentally, that Paul made so much concession to the feelings of the Jews in that region as to have Timothy circumcised. Under other circumstances (Gal. 2: 3-5) he resisted the demand to have Titus, being a Greek, circumcised. The history has not been careful to develop fully the peculiar circumstances in each case which justified this diverse policy. It does appear, however, that Timothy was of Jewish parentage on his mother's side. Perhaps on this account his case would not be considered a test of the great principle then in controversy. The case of Titus came fully under this principle; and, moreover, the struggle came on at the very time and place when the great issue was under discussion and decision. The character of Paul for staunch consistency forbids us to question the wisdom and straightforwardness of his policy in both these cases.

4. And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

5. And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

6. Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,

7. After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not.

The results of the council at Jerusalem were felt throughout these provinces in the peace, harmony and general prosperity of the churches—a precious historical testimony.

This missionary tour traversed two provinces—Phrygia and Galatia; but noticeably, the apostles were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach in the local province then called Asia, or even to enter Bithynia.

As to the relative location of these provinces, it may be said in general, that Galatia lay north of Lycaonia, having Cappadocia on the south east and Phrygia on the west; while Bithynia lay on the north west, skirting the Black Sea. Phrygia lay between Galatia and the Asia of that age in which the seven churches of Rev. 2 and 3 in as many cities, were located. Apparently the churches of Galatia, to whom Paul addressed his epistle, were planted at this time.

We meet here the question—Why this discrimination against Asia and Bithynia—the Spirit not permitting Paul to preach the gospel in those provinces? The historian suggests no reason, leaving to us only the naked fact.—But the reasons seem to me obvious. The Lord had other work for Paul, and no other man so well qualified to do it as this prince of apostolic men. The great centers of the world's thought, intelligence, culture, civilization—were not in those forbidden provinces but were in Europe, and in a very few points on the eastern continent that lay adjacent. Over in Macedonia lay Philippi and Thessalonica; perhaps more important still were Athens and Corinth, and in the yet remoter west was Rome. Over against Corinth yet in close business proximity lay Ephesus. If we add to these localities the cities of Antioch and Tarsus where Paul's power had been already felt, we have covered the main territory in which the living, controlling thought of the age had its highest development and its mightiest sweep of power. Paul's three years at Ephesus; one and a half years at Corinth; his labors not readily measured in time in Macedonia and later in Rome, will fill out the flower of his life.

Now the Lord had many apostles yet but one Paul. He had no other man of equal powers with Paul or of such adaptations for the gospel work in these great thought-centers of the age. So He forbade him to go into Bithynia or to preach in local Asia; but sent his angel to summon him across the Hellespont into the new world—Macedonia, Greece, Europe. His reasons certainly were not—that those provinces thus closed against him did not need the gospel, nor that, in the broad plans of God, they were never to have it; but that other men could do that work and Paul was needed for other work which none else could do so well as he.—The first verse of Peter's first epistle names precisely these two provinces, barred against Paul, (Asia and Bithynia) as containing brethren (churches too we may assume) to whom Peter wrote. His letters assume a personal acquaintance which carries with it personal missionary labors in those regions. The Lord in his wisdom sent Peter there, and Paul into the great centers of culture and civilization in the west.

8. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas.

9. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

10. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored

to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

This city, Troas, will suggest to many readers ancient Troy of classic renown, though only proximately on the same site. It was the point of embarkation for Macedonia. There at night Paul had a vision which brought to him the ever-memorable summons—"Come over into Macedonia and help us." In the light of this summons, Paul understood why the Spirit forbad him to preach in Asia or even to enter Bithynia. He saw where his new work lay, and formed his plans accordingly.

Here, in this v. 10, a new fact appears;—the historian Luke reveals his personality by the words, "us" "we,"—representing himself as one of Paul's group of missionary associates. Judicious interpreters are almost if not quite unanimous in assuming that the writer of this book, speaking in the simplicity of an honest man, represents himself as being with Paul precisely when he was so, and never when he was not. Here at Troas he first appears in Paul's company, and goes with him into Macedonia.

11. Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis;

12. And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

Embarking on shipboard here, and touching midway of their voyage at Samothracia, on a small island in the *Ægean*, they come to Neapolis, the harbor for Philippi, and forthwith proceed to this latter city, some ten miles distant. Luke describes this as a first-class city in that part of Macedonia, a city of prime importance, and assigns as one reason for this pre-eminence the fact that it was a Roman colony. The Emperor Augustus had established there a military settlement, composed chiefly of soldiers who had been partisans of his former rival, Mark Antony. Such colonies had a form of government modeled somewhat closely after that of Rome—a fact which accounts for the well-known designation of Roman officers (as below, vs. 20, 22), and for the high prerogatives enjoyed here of being Roman citizens (vs. 37, 38).*—In this important city our missionary group

* Akerman (high authority in numismatology) remarks, in confirmation of Luke, that there are colonial coins of Philippi from the reign of Augustus to that of Caracalla.

make their first stand on this new continent of the West, abiding here certain days.

13. And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

14. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshiped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

15. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us.

The praying people found here were presumably Jews, with possibly some proselytes. It was Paul's uniform policy in every city to make the acquaintance of the devout Jews first. In Philippi their number was perhaps too small to have a synagogue, or the city authorities may have withheld permission, so that they sought a retired place for their Sabbath worship and prayer outside the city and near the river side.—“We” [Paul, Silas, Luke and Timothy] “went out of the city to the spot where *we supposed* there was prayer”—this being the reading of the oldest and best textual authorities.—Lydia, a woman prominent both for her business relations and her piety, after receiving the gospel with open heart, became the joyful host of this apostolic fraternity, and doubtless one of the pillars in the new Christian church gathered here. Apparently Lydia and the converted jailer became a nucleus for this noble church, dear to the heart of the great apostle, above any other known to his apostolic history.

The baptism of Lydia's household raises the long-mooted question whether these were children of hers, in their infancy or minority, baptized on the faith of their Christian parent, or were domestics, employed in her business and baptized upon their own personal faith. The word “house,” or “household,” in itself admits either sense, and therefore can not be regarded as affording positive proof on the question of infant baptism. The strength of the argument from this passage for infant baptism lies in the *Jewish* usage of the word house [household] in such a connection, and in the occurrence of several similar cases, supposably that of the jailer below (v. 34), and of Stephanas (1 Cor. 1: 16).

16. And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain dam-

sel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

17. The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.

18. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

This seems to have been at a later period.—As we were going out to the place of prayer—the same place by the river-side, described above.—The word for “damsel” commonly suggests a female slave—in this case owned and used by her masters for purposes of gain.—“A spirit of divination,” considered a special gift from Apollo, the god of soothsaying. Luke speaks of her according to the current notions of the time and of that heathen people, without either indorsing or refuting those notions. As a historian, he needed only to put the case as those masters saw it.—Her testimony to the apostles as “servants of the most high God” was that of the spirit within her, expressing his conviction of the truth. Similar testimony was often borne by the demoniac spirits to Jesus and to his Messiahship. (Mark 5: 7 and Luke 4: 34 and 8: 28).—Such indorsement was not pleasant to Paul but rather was annoying, and in its general influence, damaging. So in the name of Jesus Christ he exorcised the demon spirit.

19. And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market-place unto the rulers,

20. And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

21. And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

22. And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.

23. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely:

24. Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

The cupidity of her masters aroused this fierce outbreak of mob violence. To excite the populace the more intensely, they bring odium upon the apostles as being Jews, and as troubling the city by their new religion.—The magistrates rent off, not their own clothes, but those of Paul

and Silas. The "beating with many stripes" was upon the naked body. The law of Moses limited the number of stripes to forty, less one; but Roman law prescribed no limit.—To augment their sufferings "their feet were made fast in *the wood*"—a position at once of severest confinement and of painful distortion of limbs.—These magistrates have here a name [strategoi] of military usage—which is supposed therefore to indicate an original military colony.

25. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

26. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

27. And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

The joy of God in the soul quite overpowered the tortures of quivering flesh. Having prayed, they were singing praises to God and the prisoners were listening—the tense of the words indicating continued action. Suddenly there was a great earthquake which shook the prison to its foundations; but there was more than an earthquake, for no shaking of the earth could, under natural law, break the prison bars and burst off handcuffs and rend away the stocks from the feet. God's hand was here. The instrument may have been some mighty angel—as in the release of Peter (Acts 12:)—The jailer knew that if the prisoners had escaped, his life was forfeited; yet the impulse to take his own life seems to have been that of sudden fright.

28. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

29. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,

30. And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

31. And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

32. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

33. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, and he and all his, straightway.

34. And when he had brought them into his house, he set

meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

With not the least tinge of ill-will or retaliation, or exultation over his tormentors under this testimony of God's interposition—with no feeling save that of kindness, Paul cried aloud to the jailer to stay his hand from self-murder, assuring him that every prisoner is there. Evidently the kindness of his spirit touched the jailer's heart. We can trace no other human agency. What did this jailer know before of salvation as a blessing possible to himself? Had he previously heard these apostles preaching Jesus? Did they preach to him their gospel while he was fastening their feet in the "wood?" Some such human agency is more probable than that there was none at all.—Be this as it may, they know what to answer and forthwith they speak unto him the word of the Lord and to all the inmates of his house.—His soul having found peace in this new Savior, he gives himself to the duties of humanity and hospitality.

The last clause of v. 34 is literally—"He rejoiced, house-wise [his whole house participating], himself having believed in God." The original seems to make this point very definite—that himself—not others—believed in God.

The question of household baptism is debated over this passage as well as over that of Lydia's "house." The force of the argument for infant baptism lies rather in the accumulation of several passages, coupled with the laws of Hebrew usage, than in the decisive and necessary sense of any one taken separately.—In v. 32, "All that were in his house" can scarcely be construed otherwise than of his servants—the men he must have had to aid him in his official duties. It would be harsh to apply this clause to his children. The question as to the phrases—"thy house" (v. 31); "all his" (v. 33); and "with all his house" (v. 34) is more delicate and difficult.

Of the future life of this prison keeper we have no record, but may probably count him in as one of that noble band of Christian converts whose record as a church stands among the highest known to apostolic church history.

35. And when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying, Let those men go.

36. And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go; now therefore depart, and go in peace.

37. But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.

38. And the sergeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans.

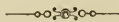
39. And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.

40. And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

Why the magistrates hasten with opening day to release their prisoners it is left to us to judge, the probabilities strongly favoring the supposition that it was due to their consternation and alarm from the earthquake scene at the prison. Heathen though they were, they could scarcely fail to see that the gods were on the side of those innocent men, and that yet more terrible vengeance might befall themselves.

Paul knew his rights as a Roman citizen, and doubtless felt that both his reputation and his safety in the future demanded a firm vindication of those rights. The treatment they had received was not only disgraceful in point of public reputation but outrageous in point of justice. The rights of the Roman citizen Cicero puts forcibly;—"To bind a Roman citizen is a crime; to scourge him is wickedness; to murder him is almost a parricide."*

In the result the magistrates humbled themselves to the extent of coming personally to "beseech" and "desire" them to leave the city.—Not in haste but leisurely, after having seen the brethren and made a parting call at the house of Lydia, they left the city.—Noticeably, Luke does not say "we" but "they"—implying that he remained—probably in charge of the infant church planted there.



CHAPTER XVII.

The scenes of this chapter cluster about three geographical localities—Thessalonica; Berea; Athens. In the first,

* "Facinus est vinciri civem Romanum; scelus verberari; prope parricidium necari."

Paul planted a church, yet personally was soon driven off by persecution (vs. 1-9); in the second, the word of God found a more ready reception, yet here the same fury of persecution made his stay short (vs. 10-15); in the third he held discussions with Jews and a few devout persons, but more especially with the Pagan schools of so-called "philosophy," closing with his great speech on Mars' Hill (vs. 16-34).

1. Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

2. And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

3. Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

4. And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

Their route lay from Philippi south-west to Amphipolis about thirty miles; then to Apollonia, the same distance and direction; thence about thirty-six miles to Thessalonica—then rich, commercial and populous; and still a flourishing city of seventy thousand people, called Saloniki. Jews were there in sufficient numbers to have a synagogue. Here Paul, as usual, commenced his work with preaching Christ three Sabbath days successively. Very minutely Luke details his great argument—viz., to show (*a.*) That according to their prophetic scriptures, their nation's Messiah was not merely (as they had thought) a powerful king, reigning and conquering on the throne of David, but that he must needs suffer even unto death, and then rise again from the dead; and (*b.*) That Jesus of Nazareth whom (said he) I preach unto you is this very Messiah.—In the result some Jews (perhaps not many) believed and attached themselves as disciples to Paul and Silas. Of devout Greeks, apparently the number was much greater; and of women of high rank and character, the number was very considerable. These Greeks were of Gentile birth and probably were proselytes—at least were occasional attendants at the synagogue. Yet Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1: 9) represents that this church was ultimately composed largely of converted idolaters.

5. But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took

unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

6. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;

7. Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

8. And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city when they heard these things.

9. And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

These envious Jews understood practically the way to raise a mob—viz., to “stir up lewd fellows of the baser sort:” excite a furor; set the city in an uproar, and so act upon the fears of the civil authorities. The house of Jason was the point of attack because the apostles were supposed to be there. Not finding them, they seized Jason himself and such brethren as fell into their hands; dragged them before the magistrates, and compelled them to give security for the apostles. The precise point of this guaranty is not stated. Probably it was that they should preach no more there;—perhaps that they would leave the city. Under these circumstances the latter was the result.—The offense charged was that in preaching Christ as Lord of all, they were virtually setting up another king than Cæsar, and so became guilty of high treason.

10. And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

12. Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

Forty-five miles still south-west brought them to Berea. That they left by night suggests a sense of danger still from the excited populace. How long Paul remained in Thessalonica does not appear;—more than three weeks and probably not exceeding six or eight. Twice during this time he received supplies from Philippi (Phil. 4: 16).

At Berea they found a synagogue and a nobler class of men, of greater candor, openness of mind and intelligent desire to learn the truth. So they searched the scriptures to ascertain whether Paul’s teachings were well sustained by

their authority. Consequently (the logic should be noticed) it followed as a thing of course that such candid inquiry brought great numbers to believe the gospel, especially from the more intelligent class.

13. But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

14. And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.

15. And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

Again, the envious, malicious Jews of Thessalonica, hearing of Paul's work at Berea, dog his steps and are once more upon him, stirring up the people to violence. Again, flight before the storm is the policy.—In v. 14, the accepted version seems to assume a feint—a mere show of going to the sea; but the better text omits the word “as,” leaving the phrase—“to go even to the sea.” It seems probable that Paul and his party took the route by sea to Athens as being both nearer, easier and more expeditious.—The venom of these persecutions singled out Paul as its chief object—his associates being much less molested.

16. Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

17. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

Paul's first impression as to Athens was that of a city *full of idols*, this being the exact sense of Paul's word. In all the heathen world of that age Athens was pre-eminent for the multiplicity of its idols. Temples, altars, statues, images filled the streets and public grounds, crowding upon the view in every direction. One ancient writer said that some of the streets were so crowded with those who sold idols that one could scarcely make his way through them. Petronius said rather sharply—“It is easier to find a god at Athens than a man.”—It is not surprising that such a spectacle stirred the spirit of Paul; sharpened his sensibilities (as the word signifies) to their keenest edge; astonished and grieved him and made him indignant, that by such a people the true God should be so utterly ignored, and that so much worship should be lavished upon nonentities that were no God at all. Therefore he threw himself into vigorous discussion

—first in the synagogue with Jews and other devout persons worshiping with them there, and next in the public market-place daily with chance people met there who would listen. He seems to have spent much less time here with the Jews than was usual in other cities—perhaps because they were less numerous, less prominent and influential, and because his soul was so mightily moved with the presence of such and so much idolatry.

18. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection.

19. And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

20. For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

21. (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)

In Athens above all cities of that age, discussion was rife. There were hosts of men whose appetite for it was keen, whose minds were inquisitive, and whose ambition to be leaders in the advanced thought of the time kept them intensely alive to all newest things.—Such a mind as Paul's, freighted with such a message as his, could not begin to move in such an atmosphere without an "encounter."—Two of the celebrated schools of Greek philosophy (this word in its social and moral sense) are brought to view here. The Epicureans, named for their founder, Epicurus, were devotees of sensual pleasure, deeming it the highest wisdom to get the utmost enjoyment out of every source within their reach. Sadducean in doctrine, with no faith in providence, human accountability, or future retribution—to whom the gods of the heathen world were virtually powerless—they had sunk to the grossest sensualism.

The Stoics honored Zeno as their master; took their name from the porch [Stoa] where he held his school; moved in a much higher plane of thought than the Epicureans; extolled virtue; made great account of subjecting the lower appetites and passions to reason, and sought to lessen suffering by cultivating a proud insensibility. While the Epicurean aimed at the maximum of pleasure, the Stoic labored for the minimum of pain. Some of the most admired characters of antiquity were of this school. They were essentially fatalists

in religious doctrine; were self-complacent and self-righteous, with scarcely the least receptivity for the purely benevolent principles and spirit of the school of Christ.

For obvious reasons, the Epicurean could have no sympathy with self-denial; would abhor all crucifixion of the flesh and have no heart to appreciate the noble principle of sacrificing one's own lesser enjoyments for the greater good of others.

Now let it be supposed that these schools of philosophy had become entrenched in social organizations, and imbued with pride of sect—not to say also, the pride of the human heart; and it need not surprise us that gospel truth fell on such souls as seed on the naked rock.—In the first place their reception of Paul was by no means respectful. “What will this babbler say?” Their word for “babblers” [spermologos] indicates that in their notion Paul had picked up a few stray thoughts (as a bird picks up scattered seeds) and was doling them out—his notions being crude, without system, unworthy of respectful notice from a Grecian philosopher!

Others thought he was preaching some new gods, for the name “Jesus” was never in their Pantheon.

Some critics have supposed that they took Paul's word “resurrection” as the name of yet another god. But this is scarcely supposable. It is better to assume that in their view the doctrine of a resurrection indicated some religious system quite unknown to them before.—So they took him, not with violence, but as a man who might give them a rare treat of novel notions, and brought him to the Arcopagus (Mars' Hill), asking—May we be able to know—will you please put us in a way to learn—what this new doctrine of yours may be? These are strange things to our ears; we desire to know what these things would turn out to be—literally—would wish to be?

V. 21, coming in here as the historian's parenthesis, would account for these questions by ascribing them to the inquisitive habits of the Athenian people. They spend their leisure time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear something *newer*—something later than the latest notions afloat.

22. Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' Hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

23. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

Dr. E. Robinson describes the situation in which Paul delivered this speech, in the words—"Standing on this elevated platform, surrounded by the learned and the wise of Athens, the multitude being perhaps on the steps and in the vale below, Paul had directly before him the far-famed Acropolis with its wonders of Grecian art, and beneath him on his left the majestic Theseum, the earliest and still most perfect of Athenian structures; while all around, other temples and altars filled the whole city." ("Bib. Researches," 1: 10).

In Paul's first sentence, translated—"in all things ye are too superstitious," it is a point of no small interest to decide whether he used his main word in a good sense or a bad; whether he sought to conciliate, or did not care though he should exasperate.—The English word "superstitious" naturally has an offensive meaning. We can not suppose that Paul would give needless offense. His well-chosen word means, Ye are very *religious*, above most other people whom I have met. Ye have a deep sense of the higher powers. Ye have gods almost without number. Ye reverence the daimonia; and this word we must take not in the Jewish but in the Grecian sense—not of the malign spirits of darkness, but of the good spirits, the guardian powers. Socrates continually speaks of his daimōn, the presiding genius of his course and of his destiny. Paul's thought is—Ye surpass most people of your age in your reverence for the higher powers that ye suppose to shape the good and the ill and determine the destinies of mortals.

Paul's reason for this estimate of Athenian character, he proceeds to give: "Passing along your streets and giving my attention—not to your 'devotions,' in the sense of prayer, worship; but—to your *objects of worship*—your altars, images, and inscribed names of the gods, I found an altar dedicated *To the unknown god.*"

It is a question of no small interest how we shall account for this recognition of a *god unknown*. Was it a loose reasoning from the indefinite number of the known that there might very probably be another—one or more—not yet brought into their pantheon? Or was it a superstitious fear that the one not otherwise recognized and honored might take offense and bring calamity upon them which even an unknown homage might avert? Or may we suppose that in their profounder sense of what the Great Supreme ought to be, they felt a demand in their reason for the existence

and supremacy of One higher and nobler far than their mythology had yet named or known, and that a strong conviction had fastened itself upon their souls that there must be one God unknown yet—this conviction becoming the occasion of an altar to his honor? The latter seems to me by no means insupposable. Contemplated in the light of the innate affirmations of the human reason, we can not say it is improbable. It is at least an honor to human nature and a just recognition of its nobler powers to think so.

This inscription became an admirable text for Paul's sermon. Nothing could be better. I come to speak to you of the one Supreme God. The very Being whom, not knowing him, ye worship—him I come to you to announce. Ye need to know Him. Your worship should be intelligent, not ignorant; should rest upon his known character and relations—not upon positively false notions, or even upon vague uncertainties.

24. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

25. Neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

26. And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

27. That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

28. For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

29. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

The very first thing to be said of the one Supreme God is, that He is the Creator of all things—heaven and earth; and therefore is rightfully Lord of all. Consequently He can not dwell in hand-made temples. Certainly he can not be dependent upon men to make him a dwelling-place for his home and accommodations; nor can he need the *service* of human hands, waiting upon him to minister to his convenience and comfort—this being the true sense of the word translated “worshiped”* (v. 25).

Surely He who gives to all the living their life, their

* Therapeuō.

breath—all things which their wants demand—can not be so poor as to need such service from them as weak, frail, sick mortals need of each other and of God.

This is flatly opposed to the current notions of the idol-worshipping heathen. They think it grateful to their gods and meritorious in themselves to lavish wealth upon temples, altars, shrines, and fill those temples with costly gifts and even the most dainty and appetizing food and drink.

Paul now advances to say that this same Infinite God—Maker and Lord of all—lifted by virtue of his infinite powers above all need of human help or service—is also the Creator of all mankind. This great fact he puts in a form which gives prominence to their distinct races and nationalities: It must not be supposed that one race of men were created by one God and other races by yet other gods. By no means. One and the same God made them all—made them of one original stock [the word “blood” is omitted in the best textual authorities]. He stands, therefore, as the common Father of them all. No one nation, race, or tribe, can claim a nobler origin than another or assume a higher dignity.—Perhaps Paul had it in his thought that standing as a Jew before these proud Athenians, this suggestion might be pertinent and wholesome.

Then, moreover, God had given the whole earth to man for his abode, determining in his providence the territorial limits of their respective countries, and the periods of time in which they might severally hold them. For really God’s hand, though unseen of mortals, lay back of all human events and gave shape to the entire apportionment of the lands of the earth among its peoples and nations.

All these things reveal God’s purpose that man should seek to know his Infinite Maker, and especially should know him as his Great Benefactor. The gift of this bountiful earth with its teeming productions and supplies for human need, coupled with its marvelous beauty and wise adaptation to man’s well being, should move him to seek after more and higher knowledge of the Great Giver of all good.

The words—“If perhaps by feeling after him, they may find him”—are peculiarly expressive. They suggest a blind man groping round with his naked hands to find by the sense of feeling some traces of the Great Maker and Father. It purposely suggests the difficulty of finding God in mere naturalism—in the material works of his hand. Paul may have put these difficulties somewhat strongly to prepare the way

for introducing the clearer, better light which God has given men by his incarnate Son and by his personal revelations of himself through his word and Spirit.—Yet this strong statement is instantly qualified by the remark—Though indeed this God is not far from any one of us, for we live, we move, we have our very existence in him. His upholding agencies are so personal, so truly present, how can we fail to have a sense of his being forever near?

At this point Paul's knowledge of Greek literature comes to his aid. He quotes from the Greek poet Aratus the beautiful and most appropriate words—"For we are his offspring." We are begotten of God. A relation analogous to that which children bear to their human father, we all bear to the Great God. Even one of your own poets had this very conception, and clothed it with these clear, unmistakable words.

Being thus God's own offspring, we ought not to think that the Deity, the very God who gave us our being, can be like gold or silver—that he can be represented by these metals or by any work of human art however ingenious or beautiful. Certainly it is infinite folly to look there for the high qualities and powers of real creatorship. The things which man makes with his human fingers and human brain can not be supposed capable of making man and of giving him these fingers and this brain. Such a notion would be most absurd folly.

30. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

31. Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

32. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.

33. So Paul departed from amongst them.

34. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

The English words "And" . . . "but now commandeth," etc., do not accurately represent Paul's words. Better thus: "Therefore, though God overlooked those times of ignorance, He now commands all men, everywhere, to repent." The force of this word "therefore" [men own] look back to the folly and sin of their idolatry, and forward to the present

duty of repenting. *Because* ye have been so deeply guilty of this sin, therefore God now enjoins repentance: the intermediate idea in which the English word “winked at” [*uperidōn*] is central, means—not that God *connived* at their sin, or had simply thrown his eye askance upon it, but that, comparatively speaking, he had passed it over, without either the punishment it had deserved or the fuller light of revelation which he was now imparting. It should have the same sense as the word “suffered” (14: 16) and “gave them up.” [*paredōken*] (Rom. 1: 24).

The command to repent assumes their guilt in their past idolatry. This universal duty of repentance Paul enforces by the consideration of a general judgment, to include the *whole world* of mankind; to be conducted and issued *in righteousness*; the Judge being already provided and designated, viz., the man Christ Jesus; and the assurance, the ground of faith, lying in his resurrection from the dead.—Thus in the briefest way possible, the great facts pertaining to this final judgment of mankind are compacted and thrown upon the souls of that great Athenian audience. They seem to have listened with a fair measure of attention, perhaps of respect, till he came to the words—“Having raised him from the dead.” Hearing this, some mocked; others, more politely, said—Enough for now: perhaps we will hear more another time.—I assume that this half promise to hear him again was nothing better than a polite excuse for cutting short the present discourse. They had no serious thought of another hearing. If they had meant that, Paul would not have left the city so abruptly, and such had not been the end of his preaching in proud Athens.

We turn back a moment to Paul’s words—“Hath appointed a day,” for the remark that the corresponding Latin words [*“indicere diem”*] were the standard law phrase for serving an indictment, issuing a summons or writ to appear in court and answer. The sense, therefore, is that God has put the whole world under a solemn indictment to appear in the august court of the universe for the moral trial of the human race; and as is taught elsewhere, of fallen angels as well.

In the result Paul left them. Only a few men joined him as disciples, believing his message—one member of the great council of the Areopagus, and one woman of character and standing, not otherwise known;—with certain others. The future history of those times makes no allusion to any church

existing here. The proud philosophy of cultured Athens supplied no congenial soil for the humbling truths of gospel salvation.



CHAPTER XVIII.

Paul at Corinth (v. 1); finds Aquila and Priscilla (vs. 2, 3); labors in the Jewish synagogue till they repel him (vs. 4-6); then in a private house with great success (vs. 7-11); the attempt to arraign him before Gallio (vs. 12-17); Paul goes to Ephesus (vs. 18, 19); then to Cesarea, Jerusalem and Antioch (vs. 20-22); and commences another missionary tour (v. 23); account of Apollos (vs. 24-28).

1. After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

2. And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.

3. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tent-makers.

Here Paul begins his personal labors at Corinth. [For a more full account of this great city, see my Introduction to his Epistles to that church].—It was by far the most important city of Greece; central by position; having extensive commercial relations; being in easy and frequent communication with Ephesus and the great East.—Here he first made the acquaintance of Aquila and Priscilla—an acquaintance which ripened into an enduring friendship, and developed into great mutual service in the work of the Lord.

Pontus, the birth-place of Aquila, was a remote north-eastern province of Asia Minor. He was at this time but recently from Rome, having been expelled with all Jews by a special decree of the emperor Claudius.—The Roman historian, Suetonius, says—"He expelled the Jews from Rome for raising tumults perpetually under the instigation of Chrestus." This passage, written fifty years after the event, is probably accurate as to the fact of expulsion, but not very reliable as to the ground for it. The date is supposed to have been A. D. 52.

Important for Paul's future life and labor was the fact that, like himself, they were by trade tent-makers, and, therefore, readily provided for him a home in their family and remunerative labor in their shop. By this means his personal wants were provided for without aid from the converts or the church at Corinth.

4. And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

5. And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

6. And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

As usual Paul began his gospel preaching in the synagogue, reasoning every sabbath day, and persuading Jews and Greeks.—In v. 5, the improved text has—not “pressed *in the spirit*”; but in the *word*. He confined himself exclusively to preaching the word. He shut himself closely to this preaching work, testifying to the Jews that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah. But when (as usual) they arrayed themselves persistently and even madly, blasphemously, against him, he shook his raiment as if to clear his skirts of their blood, and said—Take ye the responsibility of your own moral ruin:—I go to the Gentiles.

7. And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshiped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

8. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

9. Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace.

10. For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city.

11. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

At once he transferred his place of preaching from their synagogue to the private house of one Justus, immediately adjacent. Soon Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed and all his family. He is one of the two men whom Paul remembered to have baptized with his own hand (1 Cor. 1: 14).—The work progressed with great power,

and the Lord gave Paul strong words of encouragement. His special message through a vision—"Fear not"—suggests that Paul's mind, for reasons not known to us, was painfully anxious, not to say fearful. To this state of his mind, the Lord adjusted these words of comforting assurance.

This statement—"a year and a half at Corinth"—is the less valuable chronologically from the fact that some doubt remains whether this covers the *whole period* of his labors there, or only the part previous to the scene before Gallio. V. 18 shows that Paul tarried there yet a good while after the prosecution before Gallio was quashed by his refusal to hear such a case. Hence Paul's labors there continued at least one and a half years and perhaps somewhat longer.

12. And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment-seat,

13. Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

14. And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:

15. But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.

16. And he drave them from the judgment seat.

17. Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

Luke's word for "deputy" means *proconsul*. Under the existing Roman regime, this name assumes that this was a senatorial and not an imperial province. Here again Luke's historical accuracy is verified; for though under Tiberius and Caligula (the two preceding emperors) this province (Achaia) had been in the imperial class, yet under Claudius, then reigning, it became senatorial and its head officer was therefore a *proconsul*.

Gallio was a brother of Seneca, the renowned moralist, and had the very highest reputation for probity and sweetness of disposition. His brother Seneca said of him—"Of all mortals, no man has been so dear to one friend as he to all."—His record in the case before us is often greatly misapprehended, his name being made a synonym for a spirit that cares for nothing and for nobody; whereas, "the head and front of his offending" was that he would not lend his official power to the purposes of a religious persecution.

The Jews rose in a body, seized Paul and dragged him before Gallio's tribunal, charging him vaguely with teaching men "to worship God contrary to the law." By "the law" they really meant the Jewish, yet intended to be understood of the Roman.—Paul was ready to reply, when Gallio said:—If the thing charged were a crime, a real wrong, I would bear with you to any reasonable extent. But if the real offense is only a thing of words, names, questions arising under your law,—I will not be a judge of such matters—they have no place at my tribunal. I rule the case out of court; I will not hear it.

His words—"wrong or wicked lewdness"—were obviously designed to comprise all offenses that were germane to a civil suit under Roman jurisprudence. "Wrong" is intrinsic unrighteousness—a violation of right. The word translated—"wicked lewdness" suggests an easy going levity of spirit which ignores personal responsibility; knows no law but self-indulgence, and therefore naturally slumps into vice, almost without temptation. When such a spirit takes on a wicked type, it makes a case for civil law to look after. But Gallio's good sense saw at a glance that the case made against Paul had no element of this sort, so he ordered it out of court.

V. 17 is not entirely definite. Some of the better textual authorities omit the words—"the Greeks"—reading it—"and all took Sosthenes," etc. The passage seems to imply that the people were indignant against this prosecution, and gave vent to their indignation by seizing its recognized leader and beating him in the very presence of this tribunal. Gallio perhaps felt that Sosthenes and his party deserved this castigation. The whole matter lay outside the pale of his authority and he would not interfere.

The question has been raised whether this Sosthenes were the same man whom Paul (1 Cor. 1: 1) speaks of as a "brother" and associates with himself in this letter to Corinth. If so, he was converted soon after these scenes. It is quite impossible to prove the identity of these men from this identity of name. Such conversions are rather possible than probable.

18. And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow.

19. And he came to Ephesus, and left them there : but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

Cenchrea, the eastern port of Corinth, would be the place to embark for Ephesus. Why this "vow" is alluded to at all here is not apparent. The shaving of the head indicated the termination of the vow, the hair remaining unshorn during the period covered by it.

His labors at Ephesus begin here ; and as usual, in the synagogue with the Jews.

20. When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not ;

21. But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem : but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

22. And when he had landed at Cæsarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch.

He made his stay very short at this time, because he was bound in spirit to be at Jerusalem during the ensuing feast—this feast being probably the Pentecost. This probability is strengthened by the facts that navigation was scarcely opened so early as the Passover ; also, that this phrase—"the feast"—commonly designates the Pentecost.—The oldest manuscripts omit this clause in respect to the feast, but the weight of authorities sustains it.

According to v. 22, Paul made a very short stay at Jerusalem ; gave the mother church there his fraternal salutations ; and then hastened away to Antioch in Syria—his missionary headquarters—thus completing his second great missionary tour.

23. And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

After spending some time at Antioch, reporting his missionary labors, and enjoying precious Christian fellowship at this head-center of his missionary enterprise, he set forth again (supposedly about A. D. 55) and revisited in succession his churches in Galatia and in Phrygia. The length of time spent in this tour is not indicated, yet it seems to have been made rapidly.

24. And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus.

25. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord ; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

26. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

27. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:

28. For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

This man Apollos, filled a place so important in the Christian work of that age that his history is told here in all its salient points. Alexandria, of Egypt, had long been celebrated for its culture; for the great number of Jews resident there, and for their noted school of Jewish learning. There Apollos had become thoroughly conversant with the Hebrew scriptures. By some means, not now known, he had also become acquainted with John the Baptist, and hence was looking for the near coming of the Messiah. But of his actual coming he had as yet no knowledge.—In the good providence of God he was brought to Ephesus. Here he began to speak with great boldness in the Jewish synagogue. This brought him to the notice of Priscilla and Aquila, who at once took him to their Christian home and expounded to him the facts concerning Jesus of Nazareth, thus at once enlarging the sphere of his Christian knowledge and preparing him to preach the full gospel.—It being in his thought to visit Corinth, the brethren gave him letters of recommendation. Arriving there, he made himself very useful, not so much to those brethren as to their work. He helped them much in the great work in which they were engaged. His masterly knowledge of the scriptures, coupled with a fervent spirit and an eloquent tongue, gave him great power in the synagogue, where he mightily convinced the Jews that Jesus of Nazareth is surely the very Messiah of the old prophets.



CHAPTER XIX.

The scenes of this chapter are all in Ephesus. Paul finds there certain brethren, disciples of John the Baptist (vs. 1-7); preaches in the Jewish synagogue and then in the school

of Tyrannus (vs. 8-10); works extraordinary miracles (vs. 11, 12); exorcists (vs. 13-17); many abjure their magic arts (vs. 18-20); the great mob of Ephesus (vs. 21-41).

1. And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

2. He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

3. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

4. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

5. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

7. And all the men were about twelve.

The "upper coasts" were the high lands of the interior, probably including Galatia and Phrygia (18: 23); possibly also the higher districts of Asia (so called then), of which Ephesus was the capital.

This notice of the disciples of John is naturally associated with the case of Apollos, whose introduction to the gospel had been of the same sort.—In v. 2, the clause—"We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost" is badly misleading. John the Baptist taught most emphatically that Jesus should baptize men with the Holy Ghost. What they said was—"We have not heard whether the Holy Ghost is yet,"—*i. e.*, has yet manifested himself in the special way foretold by John. Beyond all question, the special aspect of the Spirit's agency here contemplated is that which is brought to view in v. 6, below—"The Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues, and prophesied." These manifestations, specially characteristic of the pentecostal age, were what they thought and spake of.

Some interpreters have sought to relieve all the difficulty in this way: We have heard nothing at all about the Holy Ghost because John did not use the Christian baptismal formula—"baptizing into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." If they had received Christian baptism, they would have heard of the Holy Ghost.—But this attempt at explanation fails to comprehend the vital facts of the case. The key to whatever might otherwise be

mysterious lies (as said above) in the special and peculiar manifestations of the Spirit in that pentecostal age.

The characteristic feature of John's baptism—seen in the pledge taken and sealed by it which holds the true significance of the rite—is brought to view here very distinctly. It was a baptism which involved *repentance*—none receiving it but such as professed to repent; and it also bound them to believe on the Great Coming One, Jesus, the nation's Messiah. It was a profession in their Messiah, not as already come but as soon to appear, and then to be accepted with ready heart.

8. And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

9. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.

10. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

As usual Paul begins at Ephesus in the Jewish synagogue, and as usual, some believed, but some believed not. The latter consequently became morally hardened and bitterly hostile. Taking ground openly against the Christian doctrine, speaking against it in Paul's meetings for Christian instruction and worship—their influence became so pernicious that Paul withdrew from their synagogue and opened Christian services in the private school-building of a certain Tyrannus. What this man was accustomed to teach, we are not told, nor indeed whether he personally accepted the gospel. We only know that he allowed them the use of his rooms; and that consequently during two full years Paul preached and discussed there daily with such audiences as gathered to hear him. Ephesus itself was a vast and populous city, and moreover its relations to the surrounding country, and indeed, to the whole province of Asia, of which it was the capital, were so intimate, and communication so easy, that in general it might be said, all Asia heard something of this gospel word.

11. And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:

12. So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

These special [not ordinary] miracles were wrought by conveying the miraculous virtue in articles of clothing, borne from Paul's person to the bodies of the sick or of those possessed with demons. These articles were of the smaller sort, easily borne—handkerchiefs [sweat-cloths] and aprons [girding the person half round]. The usual distinction between sickness and demoniacal possession, appears here, as elsewhere.

13. Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

14. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.

15. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

16. And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

17. And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

The word "vagabond" should not of itself carry a bad sense. Luke's word means only that they were traveling about. They professed to exorcise the demon spirits; *i. e.*, to expel them by adjuration, commanding them in the name of some power which could reach them with fear or force. They thought to avail themselves of the magic power of that Jesus whom Paul preached.—The evil spirit answering for himself and not for the human victim of whom he had taken possession, said, "Jesus I know and Paul I know very well—but ye—who may ye be?—Then as if insulted by their false pretensions, the man, acting under the impulse of the demon, leaped upon and drove them from the house, wounded and stripped of their garments—a very unequal contest.—The case became widely known, and a wholesome fear of dishonoring the name of Jesus fell on the people.

In what relation this man Sceva stood to the priesthood is not apparent. As the Jewish priests constituted a very numerous class, he may have been of their number, yet woeefully apostate from righteousness into the profession and business of exorcism.

18. And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds.

19. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

20. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

The miracles wrought by Paul and this assault upon the exorcists apparently conduced to throw all magicians into disrepute and to bring great numbers of them to confess their iniquity and abandon their vicious ways.—The “curious arts” referred to were those by which they practiced upon the credulity and superstition of the people. These “books” taught those “arts.” The historian would show the extent of this business by his estimate of the cost of these books.—Supposing this coin to be the Attic drachm (about fifteen cents) the total is \$7500.00. If the Jewish shekel is referred to, the amount is about four times greater. But this being a Greek city, and Luke writing for Greek readers, the Attic and not the Jewish coin must be assumed.

So the word of God extended its influence widely and with augmented power.

21. After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

22. So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.

Here are some of Paul's plans for future labor. Rome was the one great city of that age which he had not yet visited. His general purpose to plant the gospel in every great center of population and influence must have often turned his thought toward Rome. Yet he laid plans (usually) with his finite mind—God shaping their fulfillment as his infinite wisdom dictated. Paul *did* see Rome; but quite otherwise in circumstances from what he himself had thought.—A tour through Macedonia and Achaia and then a flying trip to Jerusalem—(*i. e.*, the former to gather up the collection for the poor saints of Jerusalem, and the latter to carry it to that mother church,) come into the foreground of his plan.

23. And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.

24. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;

25. Whom he called together, with the workmen of like occu-

pation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.

26. Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:

27. So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at naught; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshipeth.

28. And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

This mob illustrates the strength which a great system of idolatry acquires by intrenching itself in the business, the labor, the livelihood of masses of the people. The head man of this mob was a large dealer in the silver shrines for Diana which had a wide circulation in trade not only in the city (Ephesus) but over all the adjacent country.—These “shrines” were small model representations of the great temple of Diana, which being set up in private houses or perhaps borne about on the person, became objects of idolatrous worship.—To set this mob in motion, he first gathers together the men personally interested in this business and appeals to their pockets and to their bread, dependent on this business.—A secondary motive closely related to this, was the honor of their goddess, the glory of her temple, the power of her name and worship over the masses. Unless this could be sustained, their business must go down. Hence they look upon Paul and his associates as their personal enemies, pushing an enterprise naturally fatal to their living and to the idol system they loved.—In v. 23 “the stir about that way,” means the tremendous commotion excited against the Christian people—of that “way” of thinking.

29. And the whole city was filled with confusion; and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul’s companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theater.

30. And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.

31. And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theater.

32. Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.

These surging masses of infuriated men rushed towards

the theater as being a place convenient for a vast assembly. Not getting hold of Paul himself, they seized two of his friends from Macedonia who had accompanied him to Ephesus. Paul would have rushed into the theater, apparently with the hope and even expectation of allaying the excitement and of bearing some useful testimony for Christ there; but his friends who better estimated the frenzy of this mob would not permit him to go. The remarkable fact here is that "the chief of Asia" (v. 31)—"Asiarchs"—men holding high official positions and having specially the charge of the worship of Diana—should appear here as Paul's personal friends, protecting him by their wise counsels and policy. The hand of God must have been in this.

33. And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defense unto the people.

34. But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

This narrative leaves the reader in some doubt what this movement of the Jews contemplated. Probably these Jews were not in sympathy with Paul, yet, as Jews, they were in danger of being implicated with the Christians under the same general odium. Hence their thought was to put Alexander forward to make their defense. But the frenzy of the mob was too great for any defense of this sort, and apparently was only excited the more by his attempt.

35. And when the town-clerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshiper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?

36. Seeing then that these things can not be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.

37. For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.

38. Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another.

39. But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters it shall be determined in a lawful assembly.

40. For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.

41. And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

This “town-clerk” (or better—“city-recorder”) was, next after the proconsul himself, the highest official of the city. His primary function was to prepare and preserve the city records. Ancient authorities certify to his high rank in the municipal authorities of the city.

The first word of his speech assumes that this excitement was unjustifiable. He begins with the word *for* [gar]—all this is wrong, “*for* what man is there who does not know?” Ye have not the least occasion for this uproar; not the least need of shouting—“Great is Diana”—for all the world knows it, and no man disputes it. This city is supremely devoted to the worship of the great goddess Diana whose image fell down to us from Jupiter. Therefore, ye ought to be quiet and to do nothing under passionate excitement. Moreover, these men whom ye would fain destroy, have neither pillaged your temple, nor spoken ill of your goddess. If Demetrius and his backers have ground of accusation against any man, court-days are set [“the law is open”], and there are legal counsel; let them manage the case under the forms of civil law. If any other matter arises, let it be settled “in the lawful assembly”—that which the forms of our jurisprudence have provided.—For we are in danger of being called very sternly to account for this disturbance of the public peace—the Roman authorities being sharply jealous of any proceedings of this sort, and very severe in their punishment of riotous assemblies. Ye must see that we can not justify such a mob.—Having thus shown them that all this excitement was utterly uncalled for; that if any ground of public proceeding against Paul and his friends existed, the tribunals of the city authorities were open and easily accessible; and that they had really laid themselves and the whole city liable to severe punishment for their riotous proceedings, he officially dismissed the crowd, and virtually ordered them to their homes.—Thus this scene to which, perhaps, Paul refers (1 Cor. 15: 32) as one in which he “fought with wild beasts at Ephesus,” passed over with no bloodshed.

CHAPTER XX.

Paul's labors in Macedonia and in Greece (vs. 1-3); his traveling companions on his return tour to Syria (vs. 4, 5); scenes at Troas (vs. 6-12); moving on to Miletus (vs. 13-16); where he meets the elders of the church of Ephesus and addresses them, (vs. 17-38).

1. And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia.

2. And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece,

3. And there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.

It is pleasant to notice that after this prodigious uproar, Paul seems to take things leisurely and fearlessly; convenes the disciples for an affectionate farewell service, and then leaves for Macedonia. Having visited those churches—supposedly Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, he devotes three months to Greece, where we must think of Corinth as the important point. Having planned to sail thence into Syria, he learned that the Jews were waylaying him on that route. He, therefore, changed his plan and decided to take the indirect course through Macedonia.

4. And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus.

5. These going before tarried for us at Troas.

The fact of his taking with him these traveling companions was one of some importance, as we shall see on his arrival at Jerusalem. Moreover, some of them may have been bearers and custodians of the charity funds raised at this time in Corinth and Macedonia for the poor saints in Jerusalem, of which much is said in both of Paul's letters to Corinth (1 Cor. 16: 1-4, and 2 Cor. 8: 1-5); also in his letter to Rome (15: 25-28); and is referred to below (Acts 24: 17).—A still further purpose in selecting them to travel with Paul in this tour may have been to represent the great gospel work accomplished in the remote mission fields among the Gentiles. Hence we find one from the church of Berea; two from Thessalonica; the remaining four from Asia—*i. e.*, Gaius from Derbe; Timothy from Lystra

(cities of Lycaonia); and of the remaining two, Tychicus probably, and Trophimus certainly, of Ephesus. Tychicus appears several times in Paul's epistles, always as his faithful, trusted servant, and often "messenger," (*e. g.*, Eph. 6: 21; Col. 4: 7; and Tit. 3: 12 and 2 Tim. 4: 12). Trophimus became the innocent occasion of a sudden outbreak of violence against Paul at Jerusalem (21: 29). He is also noticed in 2 Tim. 4: 20, left by Paul sick at Miletum—the harbor of his home city, Ephesus.—These seven brethren awaited Paul's arrival to meet them at Troas.—We notice that Luke says "tarried for us"—himself having now rejoined Paul. The last previous notice of his presence with Paul (16: 16, 17) leaves him at Philippi, and compared with this notice, makes it probable that he spent much of the intervening time in or near that city.

6. And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days.

7. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

8. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.

9. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.

10. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.

11. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

12. And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

These scenes at Troas are important chiefly for the miraculous restoration of the young man Eutychus from apparent (or real) death.—Incidentally, the narrative dates their embarkation from Philippi after the passover (*i. e.*, of A. D. 58); and also records the fact (of some importance) that the disciples met to break bread (the Lord's supper) on the evening of the first day of the week—the Christian Sabbath.—As usual the meeting was held in an upper chamber—this being commonly the largest room in the house. Windows were without glass and used both for light and for ventilation. The latter purpose would account for its being open.

13. And he went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot.

14. And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene.

15. And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus.

16. For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.

The distance from Troas to Assos (about nine miles), Paul chose to walk, leaving the rest of the party to proceed by ship.—The historian names very particularly the important localities which they either touched or passed on their voyage as far as Miletus. This city was near the mouth of the Meander; was a celebrated sea-port town, twenty-eight miles from Ephesus. —Paul thought he must go past Ephesus because to stop there might detain him too long, and prevent his reaching Jerusalem by the ensuing Pentecost. Yet he specially desired an interview with the elders of that church; and therefore invited them to meet him at Miletus.

17. And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

18. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

19. Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

20. And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,

21. Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

The primary object of this interview with those elders was obviously to put before them a clear view of their official duties; to impress them with a sense of their responsibilities; to forewarn them of spiritual dangers impending over the church there. It was quite incidental that he made so many allusions to himself and to his labors in their city—the object in these allusions being (we may suppose) partly self-vindication against the aspersions every-where thrown upon his character and conduct by artful enemies (mostly Jews), and partly as an example of Christian fidelity and

earnest devotion to the gospel work. In these points of light, the whole speech is richly instructive. As a record of untiring zeal, self-sacrificing labor; enthusiastic devotion to his Master and to the saving of souls, we search the history of the church in vain for any thing to surpass it.—Both the manner of his labors and the matter of his teaching are brought out very fully. In public meetings when he could and in private labors from house to house as time and opportunity allowed—so he toiled on with never-weary devotion.—The great duties he pressed upon all men, Jews or Greeks, were repentance towards God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. This evermore and always is the substance of the gospel message—the supreme duty to be urged upon all men. Nothing else can ever displace and supersede these paramount obligations.

22. And now, behold, I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

23. Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

24. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

“Bound in the Spirit” must not be understood to mean a settled purpose, much less an obstinate, inflexible will of his own; but rather, a deep conviction, wrought in his soul by the Spirit of God that he ought to go up to Jerusalem. This conviction assumed more and more the force of a *bond*—a constraining, resistless demand—because it had to encounter such opposition. Everywhere the prophets who were inspired to reveal future events were testifying to him that bonds and afflictions awaited him there. The object sought by the Spirit in these apparently counter and conflicting revelations,—first to Paul, that he must go; and next to the prophets, that sorest trials awaited him there—was, not to harass his soul, nor to perplex him over the question of duty; but to put his obedience and endurance to the test and bring out into higher development and grander strength the martyr spirit of Christian heroism. In this spirit he declares—“None of these things move me.” Even my life itself is of no account to me in comparison with finishing my course in joyous triumph.—In this magnificent verse the original text appears with some variations in

the older authorities, yet none which change the sense materially, or put any essential point in doubt.

25. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

26. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

27. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Whether this assurance that they would see his face no more were a special revelation, or a human estimate of probabilities, affects not the propriety or the solemnity of this parting word. No pastor can be excused for taking his people to record in a way which assumes as this does a deeply conscious fidelity to their souls, unless his conscience fully sustains him. It is a solemn thing to say before God—"I am pure from your blood; I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God." But we are fully justified in assuming that Paul said none of these words rashly. He had labored in season; out of season: had pressed his work every-where with each man to the utmost extent of his power, so that this consciousness of unswerving fidelity was absolute and was perfectly sustaining. Blessed is the man whose soul rejoices in this deep conviction, with a sense, moreover, that God's own Spirit bears witness with his spirit to its sincerity and truth!

28. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

29. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

30. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Bearing upon the scriptural usage of the words "elder" and "bishop," it may be noticed here that Paul sent to Ephesus and called for the *elders* of the church; and then told them the Holy Ghost had made them *bishops* ["overseers"]—but Paul's word was *bishops*.—Let us not overlook the important fact that this solemn responsibility was laid upon them by the Holy Ghost. It was his action in the case which had made them bishops. They were amenable to Him.

"To feed the church of God"—the best textual authorities having it, "the church of the Lord;" *i. e.*, of the Lord

Jesus—he who has indeed acquired it—made it his own—“by his own blood.” An infinite claim upon the church, his redeemed people, he must surely have, who has paid for them the price of his very blood.—This reference to Christ’s sacrificial, atoning death is very brief; put in fewest words; but what words could be more significant?—To *feed* the church of God, is in the pastoral sense—which includes both spiritual food and such spiritual care and control as a flock require.—“I know that after my departing—not my death, but my leaving of you—men will come into this flock with the spirit and bearing of savage wolves—men whose influence will be pernicious and destructive as that of wolves among lambs.—While these men will come in from abroad, others will arise from among yourselves, teaching perversions of truth and beguiling unstable souls away from Christ.—It was in part to counteract these dangerous, mischievous men that Paul at a later period sent Timothy to this church and wrote him the two letters which have come down to us.

31. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

32. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

33. I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel.

34. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

35. I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Here this wonderful testimony reaches its climax. We have already seen Paul’s assiduity, earnestness, unsparing endeavor; but here we have the tenderness of tears.—For three years—with no fitfulness, no spasms of good feeling at long intervals filled with worldliness or self-seeking; I ceased not to warn, every one of every class, high or low, rich or poor, honored or despised—every one, I ceased never from warning night and day, *with tears*. Verily we must honor Paul, not alone for his clear logic; not alone for his burning eloquence, but specially and preëminently for his tender heart, his deep, outgushing sympathy with the weal and the woe of fellow-beings. Some men are great without tears; gigantic in intellect but dry at the heart. Paul was rounded out into

full, well-balanced manhood. When the pending ruin of souls called for emotion, even to agony and tears, his tears never refused to flow.—Let us not fail to notice that here lay in large measure the secret of his power. It accounts for the tenderness of this last farewell scene with those Ephesian elders;—"They all wept sore and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him,—sad above all that they were to see his face no more."—Ah, indeed, the like of Paul in heart, in tenderness, in tears—it is painfully rare to find.

In v. 32, it were better to read—"I commend you to God (and to the word of his grace)—even to God who (not "which") is able to build you up"—this power of upbuilding being ascribed directly to God rather than indirectly to his gracious word,—the more so because "the giving of an inheritance" must in reason be referred to God and not properly to his revealed word.

It was a thing of comfort in Paul's consciousness that he had kept himself above covetousness. He ruled it out of his soul sternly and utterly. Holding up to their view his hard, labor-worn hands, he could say before them—Ye know what I have been doing with these hands. They have been making tents there in Ephesus, and out of the avails of this honest labor, I have not only ministered to my own wants, but to the wants of my associate laborers. Thus I have set you an example of the true life which ever more cares for the weaker ones, and carries out the doctrine so often inculcated by the Lord Jesus:—"It is more blessed to give than to receive." We nowhere find these words of Jesus on record in this specific form. But their spirit reigned in all his life with absolute sway; and none can doubt that these words often fell from his lips.

36. And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

37. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,

38. Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

Few are the sacred spots on the face of our hard world that have been wet with such tears as these. Few scenes have been the sequel to three years of such pastoral life. For such years this was a fitting close. There are no relations among mortal men more tender—none that come nearer to

the spirit of heaven—than those which exist between the faithful, tearful, prayerful pastor, and the people with whom he has prayed, wept, toiled—whom perhaps he has first of all saved from eternal death; and then brought them into warm, earnest, coöperating labor and sympathy with himself, for the church of God. It is refreshing to linger upon such a record of sweet Christian experience. This record and revelation of Paul's inner life and gospel labor during one three-year period of his life are of priceless value. We could not know the whole of Paul without such a record and revelation.



CHAPTER XXI.

Leaving Miletus, Paul travels towards Syria, and first to Tyre (vs. 1-6); thence to Cæsarea (vs. 7-14); then to Jerusalem; his interview with James and the elders, and the advice they give him (vs. 15-26); the outbreak of violence (vs. 27-30); the Roman officer rescues him (vs. 31-36); Paul begs the privilege of making his defense (vs. 37-40).

1. And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara:

2. And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.

3. Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.

“After we were gotten from thence” suggests more than merely leaving them. It implies that they tore themselves away as friends most reluctant to part.

Coos and Rhodes were small islands which they passed on their direct route by sea from Miletus to Patara—a town on the coast of Syria. Here they landed, and next take passage in a ship engaged in the Tyrian trade, bound for that city.—“When we had discovered Cyprus”—is literally—when we had *sighted* it—it being pointed out to us. We passed it on our left—*i. e.*, they passed on the west and south of this island.

4. And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said

to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

5. And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

6. And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

Here they met disciples, some of whom prophetically apprised them that danger awaited Paul at Jerusalem, and therefore besought him not to go. This foreknowledge was from the Lord, but the advice not to go was plainly out of their own heart. Paul, as we shall soon see, was distressed by their remonstrances, but could not hear God's voice in them.

7. And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

8. And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed: and came unto Cæsarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

9. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

10. And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judæa a certain prophet, named Agabus.

11. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

12. And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

13. Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

14. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

In the first clause of v. 7, the original seems to imply that they finished their travel by sea when they reached Ptolemais—the last stage of it being a sail from Tyre to the latter city. This Ptolemais, otherwise called Acco, Acre, or St. Jean d'Acre—a very ancient and celebrated city, lay off Mt. Carmel.—Thence by land to Cæsarea, where they became guests of Philip the evangelist, of whom we read in Acts 6: 5, 6 and in 8: 5–40.

The “many days” (v. 10) spent there must be taken relatively to the time spent at the points previously named;

—seven days at Tyre; one at Ptolemais—for manifestly Paul could not have had weeks to spare before reaching Jerusalem at Pentecost.

This Agabus we may take to be the same who appears in 11: 28—being in both cases a prophet and of Judea. He too predicts the arrest and confinement of Paul at Jerusalem. According to the common usage of Hebrew prophets, he employs symbolic action to make his meaning more impressive—in this case borrowing Paul's girdle and binding his own hands and feet to signify that Paul would in this manner be bound by the Jews at Jerusalem, and so be transferred to Gentile hands.—Here, again, the brethren plead with Paul to desist from his purpose of going on to Jerusalem. His answer reveals a heart distressed almost to torture through sympathy with their strong feeling, yet perfectly decided to take the path of personal duty, though it should cost him bonds or even death at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. His conviction of personal duty was absolute, and no amount of suffering, even though unto death, could be permitted to turn him aside. He therefore begs them not to distress him by their entreaties and tears, to which he can not yield.

15. And after these days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.

16. There went with us also certain of the disciples of Cæsarea, and brought with him one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

“Carriages” in the old Saxon sense of the word, were things to be *carried*, and not conveyances for carrying. Moderns would call those things baggage or luggage. [The same usage of this old word, “carriage” appears in Judg. 18: 21 and 1 Sam. 17: 22 and Isa. 10: 28.] The reading of the original, approved by the latest authorities [episkeuasmanoi] means—having packed our baggage—i. e., for this journey.

In v. 16 the sense probably is—not that they brought with them this Mnason to be their host—a thing very improbable—but that these brethren from Cæsarea conducted Paul and his party to the house of Mnason, formerly of Cyprus but now residing in Jerusalem who was to be their host. He is represented, not as being an old man, but an old disciple, long since converted, among the earliest Christian converts.

17. And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

18. And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.

19. And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

20. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe: and they are all zealous of the law:

21. And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.

22. What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.

23. Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;

24. Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

25. As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

26. Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

The important points of this passage are, the prominence of James, supposed to have been the pastor of the church at Jerusalem; the warm Christian sympathy with which James and all the elders received Paul and his party; the interest they manifested in Paul's report of God's great work wrought under his hand among the Gentiles; but over against this, their sense of Paul's personal danger from the extremely sensitive Judaizing spirit of the Jewish believers whom they represent as being very numerous—"many thousands"—which in the word of Luke is—how many "*myriads*"—[ten thousands]. Notice also that all these zealous Judaizers have heard of Paul ["are informed of thee"], and had been egregiously *misinformed*, and therefore prejudiced against him by entirely false representations, coming doubtless from the Jews who had been in violent collision with Paul at Ephesus and perhaps, at other localities. They said that Paul taught all the Jews living in Gentile

cities, to forsake Moses; to discontinue circumcision; and to discard the customs [usages] of the Mosaic law. James and his elders therefore anticipated trouble. Those Jews will certainly learn that thou art here in the city, and they will come together under extreme excitement. What, then, shall be done?—We advise this. Here are four men under a vow who are to perform the Levitical rites required for their purification. Attach yourself to them; go with them through all the forms of purification, bearing your share of the expense, and by this means show these Jews publicly that what they have heard of thee in respect to discarding the customs of the Mosaic law is entirely without foundation.—Paul accepted this advice and was carrying it into effect, with perhaps some prospect of allaying their prejudices and securing their confidence.

27. And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

28. Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.

29. (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

30. And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

Suddenly these hopeful good results were blasted and the excited feelings of the Jews broke forth into wild fury under the instigation of certain Jews from Asia (*i. e.*, probably from Ephesus and vicinity) who had known and persecuted Paul there. They saw him in the temple; and worse yet, they had seen Trophimus, a Gentile Ephesian, with Paul in the city, and hastily assumed that Paul had taken him into the temple. This in their view was an unutterable outrage—an awful profanation of the sacred temple. Hence their rage overleaped all bounds. They rushed upon Paul, drew him out of the temple, and closed those hallowed doors against such profanation!

31. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

32. Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

33. Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.

34. And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.

35. And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

36. For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.

They had commenced to beat Paul with the full purpose to take his life—when the uproar reached the ears of the Roman chief captain. He rushed to the rescue with his centurion and soldiers, and took Paul into his own custody. —The promptness and celerity of this movement are explained by these facts:—(a.) That mob violence and uproar were strangely common in the Jewish festivals of that age, and that the Roman authorities held it to be of very grave importance to suppress them instantly:—(b.) That the castle of Antonia in which this officer had his station was on the north-west corner of the temple area, immediately overlooking the temple itself, so that it was but the work of a moment to catch the sound of such a commotion, and be on hand to rescue the objects of mob violence.

37. And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?

38. Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

39. But Paul said I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.

40. And when he had given him license, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

The chief captain had yet to learn the quality and history of the man whom he had rescued from sudden death. His first-notions were entirely erroneous. V. 38 may be read affirmatively—"Thou art not then (as I supposed) that Egyptian who before these days [not long since] raised an insurrection, and led forth into the wilderness the four thousand men of the murderers"? *

* This alludes to an insurrection then recent, indeed occurring

Noticeably, the first circumstance which began to open the eyes of this Roman officer to the better quality of his prisoner was that he spake Greek—for he seems to have known that the Egyptian imposter did not. Thenceforward he seems to have borne himself honorably, and in the spirit of Roman justice, toward this stranger, apparently accepting his own statements respecting himself (v. 39) and treating him thenceforward with impartial consideration.—It was fortunate for Paul that his native city had a fair and even high reputation for intelligence and culture, so that its citizens might legitimately claim the respect of Roman officers. Under these circumstances, Paul does not hesitate to avail himself of this reputation. He begs the privilege of addressing his countrymen, and the Roman officer readily grants it.

Standing on the stairs, *i. e.*, of the ascent to the castle, he waves his hand to invite their attention, and proceeds to address them in their own Hebrew dialect—the spoken Aramean of that age.

In its moral aspects this spectacle was grand. Look at the hero, just now plucked from between the jaws of death; a furious mob gnashing their grim teeth upon him; borne in mid air by the soldiers to lift him above their reach; then introducing himself with the coolness of a sage, to the Roman Tribune; calm, self-poised, ready and even eager for the opportunity to address his excited, almost maddened fellow-countrymen, and apparently conscious of power to hold their attention and possibly remove their prejudices and tone down

under the administration of Felix, to which Josephus has referred twice—*i. e.*, in his "Jewish War"—(2: 13: 5) and in his Antiquities (20: 7: 6)—yet in each passage he states his facts with some diversities, yet with no necessary discrepancy. In the former, he relates that a juggler, an Egyptian, claiming to be a prophet, brought up out of the desert a vast horde of thirty thousand men; located them on the Mount of Olives, and promised them that the walls of Jerusalem would fall down at his command. But Felix attacked them, the Egyptian fled with but few followers; some were slain; some made prisoners; and the rest scattered.

In the latter history he represents that this Egyptian allured a body of people out of the city to the Mount of Olives under the same promise as above; that they were attacked by Felix; four hundred slain and two hundred made prisoners. Here then are certain other facts, not inconsistent with those in the former account.

their frenzy;—there was the great man of the age, showing himself equal to the sternest emergency! Where did Paul ever appear unequal to the responsibilities of the time?

But in this estimate of Paul under emergencies, we shall dishonor the resources of his gospel and the promise of his Master if we overlook the timely words which Luke has put on record (12: 11, 12): “When they bring you before magistrates and powers, take ye no thought [anxiously] how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say, for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.”—So, without one flutter of heart-weakness, Paul holds his soul in patient trust and bides his time for this, his first, defense—the Holy Ghost giving him, at the needed moment, the best things possible to say. It is not easy to conceive a scene of higher moral sublimity.



CHAPTER XXII.

In this great speech, Paul recites his personal history previous to his conversion (vs. 1-5); then the great facts pertaining to that conversion (vs. 6-13); including his call to the gospel work and his baptism (vs. 14-16); then more particularly his divine mission to go to the Gentiles (vs. 17-21); whereupon the mob became more furiously excited and the Roman officer withdrew him into the castle (vs. 22-24), and proceeded to bind him preparatory to examination by scourging. Paul appeals to his Roman citizenship (vs. 25-30).

1. Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defense which I make now unto you.

2. (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

This address is more precisely—“Ye men, my brethren and fathers;” or in less elegant but more accurate version; “Brother-men and fathers.”—Hear my defense—my apology—my self-vindication now addressed to you.

Paul’s wisdom in using the Hebrew dialect is at once vindicated. It served (as he hoped it would) to conciliate their good will. They gave the more respectful attention. Paul meant by it to suggest to them that he was verily a Jew,

one of their own kindred and nationality; and that he cherished a profound respect for their language and institutions.

3. I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

4. And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

5. As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

6. And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

7. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8. And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

9. And they that were with me saw indeed the light and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

10. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

11. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

In v. 3 "brought up" refers, not specially to his literary education but to his physical nurture—to his bringing up from childhood and youth to manhood. This should not be connected therefore, with "the feet of Gamaliel." At those feet, he was "taught," but not "brought up." The punctuation should be—Though born in Tarsus yet brought up in this city, and taught [educated] at the feet of Gamaliel. This education was carried up to the highest standard of perfection in the law of the fathers; and I was no less zealous toward God in your sense of it than yourselves.—This Gamaliel came to view very favorably in Acts 5: 34-40.

"I persecuted this way"—the people of this *way* of thinking; *i. e.*, the sect of Christians. Your high priests and many of your elders will doubtless remember my application to them for letters of indorsement to the synagogues of Damascus. Let me call your special attention to what befell me when in the execution of this commission I had almost reached that city.

The particular events of this scene are narrated here es-

sentially as they are given by Luke (9: 1-9). The important variations are sufficiently explained there.

The fitness of this recital under these circumstances invites our notice. Briefly and plainly stated, Paul would say;—I am by birth a Jew, as are ye all. My childhood and youth, like your own, were passed in this holy city: my education under Gamaliel was as complete as the best of teachers and the highest of your schools could make it. I was as zealous for the law and as bitter against the Christian sect as the best of you are this day.—But to-day I am before you in bonds, and ye are seeking my life because I am a servant of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Will you hear me tell you how this great change in my heart and in my life came to pass?

Under this state of facts, Paul did the best thing possible. There was nothing he could say more to his purpose than this story of his conversion. In this he declared to his countrymen—I became a Christian because Jesus of Nazareth met me with overpowering majesty and splendor and yet with ineffable tenderness and love, and asked me why I was persecuting him in the person of his people. I could give no reason why. I saw that I was persecuting the long-promised but now manifested Messiah of my fathers—the Great Coming One, so long foretold and waited for by all the good men of our nation. I could do this no longer. God called to me out of heaven. I knew his voice, and I could not resist his call.

These facts will show you why I preach Jesus of Nazareth, and why I am in bonds before you this day.

12. And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,

13. Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

14. And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

15. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

16. And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord:

These descriptive points of Ananias are chosen and put admirably to meet the occasion. He was God's chosen instrument for restoring Paul's lost eye-sight, and also for bringing to him the new vision of what the Lord would

have him do. This man, Paul would say, was by no means a Gentile. He was a faithful and most worthy Jew ; a devout man even in the sense of your law ; a man of unblemished reputation with all his people dwelling there.—Consider also what he said :—“The God of our fathers” [our own Hebrew patriarchs]—hath chosen thee that thou shouldest know what his will is concerning thee (in answer to my first and greatest question—“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”)—that thou should with thine own eyes see the glorious One who was to come—our nation’s long promised Messiah, and shouldest have your commission and instructions from his lips. For thou art specially called to become a witness for him unto all men [of all nations] as to all which thou hast learned of him and of his salvation.

It will be seen here that Paul not only traces his commission to preach the gospel directly back to the Great Master already come, but traces it through the interposition of a most devout and worthy Jew whom all his people held in honor—Ananias of Damascus.

“Be baptized, and wash away thy sins” conceives of baptism as doing in fact what it represents in type and *symbol*. Its significance lies in its being a symbol of the moral cleansing wrought by the Holy Ghost. In this view of its significance Ananias could say—Arise and be baptized, and so signify your faith in the spiritually cleansing power of the Spirit of God.

The form of the verb baptize—[translated “be baptized”]—is not the Greek passive voice, but the middle. The exact sense, therefore, will be—have thyself baptized ; let another baptize thee. This is the only case of this precise usage.

17. And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance ;

18. And saw him saying unto me, Make haste and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem : for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

19. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee :

20. And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

21. And he said unto me, Depart : for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

In this defense, Paul must needs answer the question which he knew was in a thousand Jewish souls there before

him ;—How came you to go off among the Gentiles? Who sent you there?

Paul answers—I was at Jerusalem. I was feeling very much at home here ; yet I was truly desirous to know the will of my Master on this point, and consequently was praying in the temple—the usual place for burdened hearts—longing to know the will of God. There, in an entranced state, I saw the Lord and heard him say to me—“ Make haste and get out of Jerusalem ; for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.”—Ye are not to suppose that I had been asking for such orders, or that I was eager to obey them. On the other hand, I really allowed myself to debate this matter, and to suggest that as they knew me very well—knew my former Jewish life—knew how earnestly I had persecuted these Christians, it would seem that no man could preach Jesus Christ to them so hopefully and with so much power as myself.

But, far from admitting the force of my argument, the Lord answered most peremptorily :—“ Depart from Jerusalem ; I send thee far hence to the Gentiles.”

22. And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth : for it is not fit that he should live.

23. And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air,

24. The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging ; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.

At this word—“ Go to the Gentiles,” the pent fires and furies of their fanaticism broke forth afresh, and again they raise the wild shout—“ Away with such a fellow from the earth : kill him ! ” In mad excitement they tore off their garments, and cast dust into the air in the wildest rage. This called for the interposition of the Roman tribune who ordered him to be at once brought into the castle.—The brutal practice of examining a prisoner by scourging assumed, strangely, that the truth could be wrenched out of a man by torture, and could not be obtained reliably in any more civilized way. The only apology that can be made for this Roman officer is that he found the usage established, and that he did not know Paul yet. Probably he did not understand Paul’s Hebrew tongue, and so was none the wiser for his speech. This outburst of rage from the crowd may have led him to suppose that Paul must be guilty of some flagrant

crime, and therefore that he must examine him by torture to ascertain what it was.

25. And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

26. When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest, for this man is a Roman.

27. Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.

28. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born.

29. Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

30. On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

As they were binding him in preparation for the torture, Paul remonstrated, declaring—I am a Roman citizen and uncondemned: have you any right to scourge me?—This remonstrance was in Roman ears a note of alarm, and soon brought the chief captain. Whether incredulous or not, he put the question squarely—Art thou indeed a Roman citizen? This honor cost me a round sum.—Aye, but (said Paul) I was born to this high honor.—How Paul came to inherit this right of Roman citizenship is not certainly known. Various methods were possible.

The penalties for outraging the person of a Roman citizen were severe. Here, therefore, as at Philippi, it gave immunity at once from illegal violence.

The Roman officer, desirous to know the real ground of this furious clamor of the Jews against Paul, provided for giving him a hearing (before the Jewish Sanhedrim on the morrow).



CHAPTER XXIII.

Paul is here before the Jewish council (vs. 1-5); declares himself a Pharisee as to the doctrine of the resurrection, and thus throws the apple of discord into the council (vs.

6-9); the Roman officer withdraws Paul into the castle, and the Lord appears for his comfort (vs. 10, 11); forty men conspire to take his life (vs. 12-15); how Paul hears of it, and informs the chief captain (vs. 16-22); is sent under guard to Felix at Cæsarea, with a written statement of his case (vs. 23-35).

1. And Paul earnestly beholding the council said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

2. And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.

3. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?

4. And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?

5. Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

"Earnestly beholding"—looking the council fully in the face, as one under no consciousness of crime;—not as a man ashamed through conscious guilt to look good men in the face.—"Men and brethren"—here as heretofore—Ye men who are brethren; brother-men.—The exact sense of the clause—"lived in all good conscience," is—I have lived toward God with entire consciousness of rectitude until this day.—The primary sense of the verb is—Have borne myself as a citizen under God—a subject of his kingdom.

"Until this day"—purposely covers his whole Christian life since his conversion; for it was of this portion that the case required him to speak. Ye know how I lived before that eventful day and will not find fault with me as to that; but let me tell you, I have lived in purer, more upright conscience toward God ever since than before.

This declaration of his own innocence gave mortal offense; for it assumed *their* guilt. If he was right, they were wrong.—Smiting the prisoner under trial upon the mouth is not uncommon even to this day in Oriental courts. Modern travelers find cases in Persia. The prisoner who allows himself to speak more freely than pleases the court gets this rebuff.

This outrageous injustice stirs Paul's indignation. God will soon smite thee, thou whited wall; for dost thou sit in the seat of justice to administer toward me a righteous law, and then break that righteous law thyself by ordering that I be unlawfully smitten! Paul remembers that the law saith (Lev. 19: 15) "Thou shalt do no unrighteousness in

judgment; in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor." "Thou whited wall" is illustrated by Matt. 23: 27:—"Ye" [Pharisees] "are like unto whited sepulchres which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but within are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness."—The Jews white-washed their sepulchres to make their localities so conspicuous that all might avoid inadvertent defilement.

Paul's words—"I wist not that he was the High Priest"—have received two quite diverse constructions:—(a.) I did not know the fact; And (b.) I inadvertently overlooked the fact; it was not on my mind.—The former is the exact sense of his words. I did not know that he is high priest.—The latter sense (b) it is, to say the least, very difficult to justify from these words of Paul. It is therefore, better to assume either that there was some real question as to his holding the office legitimately; or that the office changed hands so frequently at that time that the knowledge of his being the incumbent had not reached Paul.—In this view of Paul's meaning, we understand him to imply—If I had known that he is high priest, I should have refrained from violating that very righteous law of Moses (Ex. 22: 28)—"Thou shalt not curse [speak ill off] the ruler of thy people."—It was very pertinent that before this court, Paul should speak in these respectful terms of the law of Moses.

6. But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

7. And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

8. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

9. And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

This stroke of policy was adroit, and yet was a justifiable adroitness; for though Paul did not say all the truth, he yet kept himself fully within the truth. He did not claim to be a Pharisee in all points, but only in the point of the resurrection of the dead and the doctrine of the existence of spirits which it assumed.—Of course he was perfectly familiar with the respective attitudes of Pharisee and Sadducee. Hence as soon as he saw that both parties were represented

in that council, his quick eye caught his opportunity and he hurled this apple of discord, as it were a bombshell, into the camp of those old antagonists—and doubtless quietly enjoyed the resulting battle. In v. 9, under the word for “strove,” Luke suggests that they fought it through and through, battling with each other.—It was strictly true that Paul was a Pharisee by birth, and no less by education. Possibly these well-known facts served, just at this moment, to place the Pharisees in sympathy with himself.—But in this new and bold attitude of Paul before the council, the most vital point is in the words—“Of the hope and resurrection of the dead, I am called in question.”—These words—“hope” and “resurrection”—some critics combine into one thought—The hope of a resurrection. This combination, however, is rarely admissible. Moreover, in this very condensed form of statement, it seems quite legitimate to expand the sense of this word “*hope*” so that it shall refer to the great national *Hope* of Israel; viz., the long, oft-promised Messiah. This view of its meaning seems to me to be sustained by the more expanded statement (26: 6, 7)—“And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope’s sake, I am accused of the Jews.”—So interpreted, Paul means to say—I am on trial, indicted upon two great points, viz., my faith in my nation’s promised Messiah; and my faith in the resurrection. These two points were closely blended inasmuch as the resurrection of Jesus was the grand proof of his being the nation’s Messiah.

That the Sadducees denied both the resurrection and the existence of spirits—*i. e.*, were materialists—appears in their controversies with Jesus. (See Luke 20: 27–38 and Notes thereon,)—and is fully confirmed by Josephus. In his “Jewish War” (2: 8: 14), he says—“The Sadducees reject the permanence or existence of the soul after death, and the rewards and punishments of an invisible world.”—Again, in his “Antiquities” (18: 1: 4)—“The Sadducees hold that the souls of men perish with their bodies.”—The Talmudists and other Jewish writers sustain this view of the Sadducean faith.

In v. 9, the better textual authorities omit the last clause—“Let us not fight against God;”—making the sense—We find no wrong [evil] in this man; if spirit or angel hath

spoken to him—what then?—or, what if spirit or angel may have spoken to him?

10. And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.

11. And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul, for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

Paul was in danger of being literally pulled in pieces, for the party of the Pharisees were rushing in to protect him—the Sadducees, to seize him and put him to death.

In the night that followed, after the exciting scenes and perils of this day, the Lord came to Paul with words of cheer:—"As thou hast nobly testified for me here in Jerusalem, so shalt thou also in Rome." Of course this covered his personal safety through these perils from mob violence, through his future hearings before Jewish or Roman tribunals, and through the dangers of the sea.

12. And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

13. And there were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.

14. And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.

15. Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to-morrow, as though ye would inquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

In v. 12, the better text reads—not "certain of the Jews"—but "the Jews."—"Bound themselves under a curse"—is literally—*anathematized* themselves; and more fully (v. 14) "We have *anathematized* ourselves with anathema."—Failing in their efforts to convict Paul of capital crime before the Roman tribunal, they lay this plot for waylaying and murder.—The thoughtful reader will be struck with the vast superiority of Roman justice above Jewish. The spirit of fanaticism in this Jewish Sanhedrim and their supporters, is simply amazing—a perfect outrage on every principle of justice and even common humanity. It is plain that the council indorsed this scheme of waylaying and murder, and became parties to it with no appa-

rent misgiving. A passage from Philo—a writer perfectly familiar with the Jewish fanaticism of that age—will develop its spirit:—"When a Jew forsakes the worship of the true God, it is highly proper that all who have a zeal for virtue should have a right to punish him with their own hand without delay, not carrying them before a court of judicature, or any magistrate; but inflicting immediate punishment, regarding themselves for the time *as all things*—senators, judges, prætors, sergeants, accusers, witnesses, the law, the people—so that, hindered by nothing, they may without fear and with all promptitude, espouse the cause of piety."

16. And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

17. Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him.

18. So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.

19. Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me?

20. And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to-morrow into the council, as though they would inquire somewhat of him more perfectly.

21. But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.

22. So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast showed these things to me.

How Paul's nephew chanced to hear of this plot and its plan does not appear. But we know that the Lord always has means ready for the ends he desires.—Luke (v. 16) calls their scheme a "trap" ["lying in wait."]—The centurion—captain of a hundred men—had the immediate charge of Paul. Through him Paul gets the case before the chief captain.

23. And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Cæsarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night;

24. And provide them beasts that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor.

This strong military escort and the starting off after night-fall, assumed a sense of no small danger of an attempt upon Paul's life during this journey.

25. And he wrote a letter after this manner:

26. Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting.

27. This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.

28. And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council:

29. Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds.

30. And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell.

Felix was at this time the Roman Procurator of Judea, having received this office from the Emperor Claudius, probably in A. D. 52. He had prominent faults of character, but, also, some of the sterling excellencies of a Roman officer.—This letter to him is a fine specimen of Roman military correspondence—direct, explicit, respectful.—In v. 27 the English—"Should have been killed"—is liable to misconception. It certainly can not mean—*ought* to have been. The Greek is precisely—*Was about to be killed* by them.—The fact of his being a Roman citizen was abundant reason for his rescue. But besides this, he informs the governor that the accusations against Paul pertained only to certain questions of their law, and involved nothing worthy of death or of bonds.

31. Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris.

32. On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle:

33. Who, when they came to Cæsarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him.

34. And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia;

35. I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.

The inquiry—of what province?—may have been suggested by the statement that he was a Roman citizen. Paul could explain how this came to pass.—This judgment hall was built by Herod, and, therefore, bore his name.



CHAPTER XXIV.

The one subject in this chapter is the hearing of Paul before Felix;—comprising the argument of the prosecution, managed by one Tertullus (vs. 1-9); Paul's defense, including the negative points (vs. 10-13); and the positive (vs. 14-16); and a further statement (vs. 17-21); Felix postpones his decision (vs. 22, 23); hears Paul again in the presence of his wife, Drusilla (vs. 24, 25); but is removed from office, leaving this case yet undecided (vs. 26, 27).

1. And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.

2. And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence,

3. We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

“Descended”—*i. e.*, came down from Jerusalem to Cæsarea. Whether Jerusalem were of higher altitude than other places or not, usage always spake of going to Jerusalem as going up;—from it, as going down.

This orator [advocate] Tertullus, as his name implies, was a Roman—the Roman law requiring that all cases brought to trial before their own courts should be conducted by advocates admitted to their own bar.

“Informed the governor,” is in the sense of presenting the case for the prosecution.—In v. 2, read—This man [Paul] having been called up, or in modern phrase, Paul's case having been called, Tertullus commenced his plea for the prosecution; and first he compliments the court [governor] with very fulsome flattery.—In v. 3, the words “always and in all places,” may qualify the doing of worthy deeds for the Jewish nation under his administration. His meaning may be that those worthy deeds had been continuous and wrought

under all circumstances.—The compliment was partly true and partly not true. Felix had borne a strong hand in the suppression of guerrilla robber bands, then sorely molesting Judea; but his general administration over the Jews had been venal, oppressive, and thoroughly odious. “Both Josephus and Tacitus represent him as one of the most corrupt and oppressive rulers ever sent by the Romans into Judea.”

4. Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words.

5. For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes:

6. Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.

7. But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands,

8. Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him.

9. And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.

The word “clemency” seems to mean, not so much mildness, or gentleness, or even kindness, as impartiality, equity—the qualities specially requisite in a judge.

In his prosecution Tertullus makes three points:—(1.) That Paul was a *pest*, exciting Jews all the world over to sedition—*i. e.*, involving them in quarrels among themselves:—(2.) A ring-leader of the odious Nazarenes—a reproachful name applied here to Christians as being followers of Jesus of Nazareth:—(3.) Sacrilege, in attempting to profane the temple.—The older textual authorities, and consequently the best modern critics, omit, in v. 6, all after the word “took”; also all of v. 7, and in v. 8, the clause—commanding his accusers to come to thee; so that the first part of v. 6, is followed by a portion of v. 8, thus:—“Whom we took, by examining whom thyself mayest know all these things,” etc.—Supposing this doubtful passage to be genuine, there is much in it of egregious misrepresentation. So far from wishing or intending to judge him according to their law, they only sought to kill him (see 21: 31 and 26: 21).—The Jews, *i. e.*, the high priest and his elders indorsed the accusation as put by their advocate.

10. Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of

many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:

11. Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.

12. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city:

13. Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

Paul descends to no unworthy flattery, but says that he answers in his own defense cheerfully, because Felix had been several years in office, and, therefore, had ample opportunity to learn the general character of the Jewish Sanhedrim, and, perhaps, also, to know something of Christianity.—Felix is supposed to have entered upon his procuratorship A. D. 52—then six or seven years ago.

Paul's first point is that Felix had the means of knowing [literally, "thyself being able to know"] that it is now only twelve days since I came up to Jerusalem to worship at this feast. The time, therefore, within which the chief crimes charged against him could have been committed was very short, and Felix could easily ascertain how Paul had been employed during this brief period.—Paul proceeds to deny all the charges brought against him of misdemeanor during these twelve days. They never found me disputing in the temple, or exciting sedition anywhere in the synagogues or in the city.

14. But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets.

15. And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

16. And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men.

On the positive side Paul very frankly avows his faith and his Christian life.—“After the way which they call heresy”—which means (as usual) the *way* of thinking—according to the system of doctrine and the course of life which they denounce as a heresy, so do I worship the God of my fathers. So far from having apostatized from my fathers' God (he would say) I worship Him far more truly and earnestly than my accusers do. Most thoroughly do I believe both the law and the prophets. Especially do I hold firmly to that great and

glorious "*hope*" which ye—which all Pharisees—profess also to hold, viz., of a universal resurrection of all men—the just and the unjust.—Paul did not overstate the case in representing this doctrine of a universal resurrection as the general belief of the Jews. The Sadducees, he well knew, denied the resurrection; but he also knew that they were relatively few in number and that they did not represent the prevalent belief of Jews. On these great points of religious belief, the masses held with the Pharisees and not with the Sadducees.—Holding this faith (Paul would say) I am constrained to a conscientious life. I dare not sin against my conscience and against my God, with this great fact of the resurrection and its consequent general judgment thoroughly in my soul as eternal truth.

17. Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.

18. Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude nor with tumult.

19. Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me.

20. Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council,

21. Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

He had been absent several years—for it was now about A. D. 58, and Paul's last previous visit at Jerusalem was in A. D. 54 or 55.

The "*alms*" to which Paul refers were those collections made at Corinth and Macedonia of which we read quite fully in Rom. 15: 25, 26 and 1 Cor. 16: 1-4 and 2 Cor. 8: 1-4. The allusion to these alms made here is entirely incidental. A much more full account of the whole transaction may be gathered from Paul's epistles. Thus this history corroborates the epistles, and the epistles, the history—the coincidence being manifestly not of design but entirely incidental.

Notice that Paul was presenting the required offerings, pursuant to his vow (21: 26, 27) when suddenly the excited Jews fell upon him and put an end to his purifying of himself in the temple. Those Jews from Asia who sprung the mob upon Paul ought (Paul suggests) to have been here if they had any charge to bring against me. Or let my accusers who stand here say definitely if they have found any wrong thing—any crime done by me.—Except it be that

one voice [utterance]—that one thing said—viz., the declaring of his faith in the resurrection of the dead and putting this as essentially the substance of his creed as a Christian.

22. And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.

23. And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.

The better supported textual authorities omit the words—“When Felix heard these things”—giving only this:—But Felix put them over—*i. e.*, adjourned the case, knowing more accurately the things concerning this sect.—Here we meet the question—What is the point of this comparison?—more accurately than *what*? Probably this;—more accurately than to decide the case against Paul; more accurately than to believe the charges of the prosecution to be well sustained, or to involve any real crime even if proved. He had (presumably) learned something of true Christianity; and he could not but see that the charges brought against Paul were both false and frivolous—the result of bigotry and malign fanaticism—involving no crime against wholesome civil law, and not the least offense which his Roman court could rightfully punish.—Therefore, not willing either to offend the Jews by acquitting Paul, or to violate his sense of justice by condemning him, he adopted the cowardly expedient of adjourning the decision under the pretense of a more thorough investigation when Lysias should come down to his city. Then, said he, I will know your matter—all that pertains to the case—most thoroughly.—This was promising very fairly, considering that he already knew enough to demand his prompt and full acquittal.—Meantime his conviction of Paul’s innocence avails to ameliorate the severity of his confinement. Consequently he places him under the general charge of a centurion, and allows his friends the freest access.

24. And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

25. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

26. He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.

27. But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

To estimate Paul's fidelity to truth and to the souls of men, and to get the full moral value of his example, we need to know somewhat the character and life of these two hearers, Felix and Drusilla.

Of this Felix, the historian Tacitus—always terse and intentionally truthful—records that “he exercised the power of a king in the spirit of a slave;” that “relying upon the influence of his brother at the court (the infamous Pallas), he acted as if he had a license to commit every crime with impunity.” Finally, he puts his moral character in two most expressive words—*cruelty and lust* [“*sævitiam et libidinem*”].

This Drusilla, also, has an infamous historic record. According to Josephus, she was a daughter of Herod Agrippa (of Acts 12: 1, 20–23; a sister of the Agrippa who appears in Acts 25: 13); was married to Azizus, king of the Emesenes, but shortly after was persuaded to desert him and to marry Felix. In this case, the words of Josephus are—“When Felix was procurator of Judea, he saw her, and being captivated by her beauty, persuaded her to desert her husband, transgress the laws of her country and marry himself.”—Such were the parties before whom Paul is brought to be heard “concerning the faith in Christ.”

“Felix having come with his wife Drusilla”—apparently having brought her to his home at the close of his wedding tour. She being a Jewess, and curious to hear the famous gospel preacher Paul, Felix arranges for this hearing.

As to Paul, he could in no wise preach “the faith of Christ” without presenting him as one who saves his people from their sins. To do this involved the presentation here made of *what sin is*. He was not, therefore, going aside from his legitimate subject—was not digressing from his theme, nor saying things irrelevant to the character of his audience, when in the presence of such a king and of such a queen, he “reasoned of righteousness” [intrinsic justice], “and of temperance,” not merely in the modern sense of abstaining from strong drink, but in the broadest sense—chastity, self-control over all unhallowed passions;—and “of the judgment that is about to come”—that final, eventful,

awful day, when God “will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained” (Acts 17: 31). Reasoning upon these themes involves the setting them forth in their logical and practical relations; their intrinsic fitness; their pungent and certain application to all sinful men and women, whether in the hovels of the poor, or in the palaces of the great, or upon the thrones of the mighty.

Under this preaching of the faith in Christ, it is not said whether Drusilla listened, or cared, or felt compunction; but Felix was alarmed. He became fear-stricken. The word “trembled” should not be applied to physical agitation, but rather to his mental state.—Under this tremendous pressure, what did he do? He said—“Go, for now—for the present; but (literally) having found a fit time, I will call for thee;” *i. e.*, when I shall have found an opportunity—an appropriate time—you shall be invited in for a further hearing.—So he stifled his convictions; applied this balm to his stricken conscience—and went on in his old sins!

“At the same time hoping that money would be given him by Paul”—should be closely connected with the verse preceding. It was one of the ruling considerations in his mind. The prisoner before him had friends, he knew; and remembering that he brought a very considerable contribution from distant churches to the poor saints at Jerusalem, the thought and hope of making money out of this case induced him to send for Paul often and talk over this matter.—We may safely presume that Paul did not raise his hope of money; and next, that he neglected no opportunity to press the conscience of this guilty king. But, this conscience (we may presume) lost its sensibility to conviction of truth after the first struggle had ended in staving off the proper decision. If this forcing off by postponement could have left any sensibility unscathed, his debasing cupidity must have seared and ossified what had been a conscience, “as with a hot iron.” Alas! the havoc made upon human souls by this love of money!

The reader should notice that Paul, thus brought before kings to speak of Christ, with the present consciousness that personal liberty if not even life was at stake, yet spake not for himself, but for God and righteousness, with unflinching fidelity to the consciences and to the souls of his two hearers. Here, as in his three years’ labor at Ephesus, his supreme desire was to be pure from the blood of all. Never

a king should have it to say that he “had shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.”

There are also obvious and weighty moral lessons from this case of Felix—a troubled conscience roused to solemn fear for the moment, but resisting and evading the present pressure of conviction; and then apparently, going through life with a conscience hopelessly seared, and for all practical purposes dead.—Alas, that Felix should have such a following, by myriads of like self-hardened souls!

“After two years”—*i. e.*, of Paul’s confinement at Cæsarea, Felix was superseded by Festus. The date of this change is fixed with a good degree of certainty in A. D. 60.—His motive for leaving Paul in bonds, more closely confined than before (v. 23) was that he might lay up for himself favors with the Jews—do what they would take as a favor to themselves. His reason for seeking their good will was that they might not follow him to Rome with their (very just) complaints against his administration. He had but too much reason to fear this. Other Roman officers, retiring from office, had pursued the same selfish and unrighteous policy. It is supposed to have been in his case unsuccessful, as, in justice, it ought to have been.



CHAPTER XXV .

This chapter presents Paul under Festus (successor to Felix), including the unsuccessful efforts of the Jews to have him taken up to Jerusalem (v. 1-5); a hearing before Festus at Cæsarea (vs. 6-8); still another proposition to Paul to go up to Jerusalem for trial which Festus sustains, but Paul refuses and appeals to Cesar (vs. 9-12). Agrippa and Bernice visit Festus (v. 13); who lays Paul’s case before them (vs. 14-21); Agrippa wishes to hear Paul (v. 22); and Festus explains the state of Paul’s case (vs. 23-27).

1. Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Cæsarea to Jerusalem.

Josephus fully sustains Luke, to the point that Festus was the immediate successor of Felix. His administration continued somewhat less than two years (A. D. 60-62), and terminated with his death. His record is in the main fair—

much more so than that of Felix before him or of Albinus, next after.

2. Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him,

3. And desired favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.

4. But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Cæsarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither.

5. Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.

Before him the leading Jews renew their prosecution against Paul, asking as a special favor to themselves that Festus would order Paul brought to Jerusalem, ostensibly for trial, but really for the purpose of waylaying him and taking his life. At this stage of their nation's history, the ruling authorities at Jerusalem were utterly unprincipled; reckless of justice; equal to the most outrageous villainy. The government was too rotten morally to exist many years longer. The terrific retribution which swept city and people to ruin within less than ten years from this date, was a legitimate result of foregone national wickedness.

To their request Festus replied—Paul will remain at Cæsarea—the proper place for his trial. I am going there shortly. If ye have charges to bring against him, ye shall have a hearing.

In v. 5, the clause—"Those among you who are able"—admits of two slightly different constructions; (*a.*) Your strong, mighty men;—or (*b.*) Those men among you who are strong for this special purpose, having good ability to conduct this prosecution. The latter seems most in harmony with the course of thought.

6. And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Cæsarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment-seat commanded Paul to be brought.

7. And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.

8. While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Cæsar, have I offended any thing at all.

Luke gives the substance of this trial—not its details.—The things charged against Paul were many and grievous; but the proof was wanting. Hence it was only necessary

for Paul to answer with explicit denial.—I have neither violated Jewish law nor profaned their temple nor committed any crime against Cesar.

9. But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?

10. Then said Paul, I stand at Cæsar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.

11. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cesar.

Festus, still wishing to gratify the Jews, asks Paul yet again if he is willing to go up to Jerusalem for a new trial.—It is a question whether this implied merely a change in the *place* of holding the court, or a change in the court itself—*i. e.*, from the Roman tribunal to the Jewish. The form of the question as put here seems to assume the former; but Paul's answer most decidedly supposes the latter. He saw in the proposition a scheme of the Jews, with consent of Festus, to remove his case from the Roman tribunal to the Jewish. Against this he firmly protested. Fully aware of his rights as a Roman citizen, he said—"I stand at Cæsar's judgment seat and there I will stand till my case is finally decided."

In the last clause of v. 10, Paul's word is comparative, not superlative, meaning—As thou knowest better—not "very well;" but better than thou didst before this late hearing; for now thou must certainly know that the Jews have proved nothing against me which Roman law can recognize as wrong.—In the spirit of conscious innocence Paul declares with sublime grandeur—I am ready to meet all the legitimate and righteous consequences of whatever real crime I may be guilty; but I am not ready to sacrifice my life to a false and baseless prosecution. I ought not to throw my life away to gratify the malice of the Jews—and will not. Let no man surrender me to their bloody hands. I appeal unto Cesar.

Apparently Paul lacked entire confidence even in Festus on his Roman tribunal, so long as his desire to gratify the Jews was stronger than his sense of justice. There seemed to him to be no absolute safety short of an appeal to the Emperor himself.

12. Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, an-

swered, Hast thou appealed unto Cæsar? unto Cæsar shalt thou go.

This "Council" with whom Festus conferred ["consulted") was not the Jewish Council [Sanhedrim], but, as the Greek word shows, was his own Roman jury, or bench of associate Roman judges.

The last clause is better read affirmatively:—"Thou hast appealed to Cæsar; thou shalt go to Cæsar." It is thy right to make this appeal of thy case; we concede it; and shall take measures accordingly.

13. And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Cæsarea to salute Festus.

This Agrippa was a son of Herod Agrippa whose death is narrated Acts 12: 21-23. Being but seventeen years of age at the death of his father, he was thought too young to succeed to the entire dominions of his father. He was made king of Chalcis, and subsequently received the tetrarchate of his uncle Philip (Luke 3: 1); and also certain parts of Galilee and Perea, with the royal title, "king." Luke's usage of titles evinces his accurate historical information.

Bernice was his sister. Her marriage record was most scandalous. Agrippa was a Jew, not by birth precisely but by education—he being of Herodian or Asmonean stock.

This visit of Agrippa to Festus was one of civility, perhaps induced by some hope of being called upon to assist or officiate in the trial of Paul, or at least, of making himself acquainted with a man so celebrated.

14. And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:

15. About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him.

16. To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have his accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.

17. Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth.

18. Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed:

19. But had certain questions against him of their own super-

stition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

20. And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters.

21. But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Cæsar.

Here Festus introduces to his royal guests the case of Paul, left under bonds by Felix, who moreover had been prosecuted by the Jews and tried before himself.—As Festus here puts the case, he represents himself to have been in grave doubt how to decide this class of questions, and that therefore he asked Paul if he would consent to go up to Jerusalem and have a trial there. This proposal Paul had refused, and forthwith appealed to Cæsar.—But the historian (vs. 6–11) has given a different view of the case—viz., that the Jews utterly failed to prove any one of their many and grievous complaints against Paul; and then, that, purely to gratify the Jews, Festus did not set Paul at liberty, as in Roman justice he ought to have done; but asked him if he would go up to Jerusalem for trial there.—This new version of the real facts of the case which seems to have been an after-thought, designed to put in the back-ground, or even out of sight, the utterly indefensible course of the Roman procurator, does not turn to the credit of his honesty or veracity.

Some points in this passage need a word of exposition.—In v. 15, the legally technical use of the word “informed” (as in 24: 1 and 25: 2) has the sense of being a formal indictment charging crime.—In v. 16 the words, “to die” [for destruction] lack the best textual authority. Without them, the verb itself carries essentially the same sense, suggesting, however, the giving up of the accused as a special favor to the prosecuting party. Just to gratify the prosecution, Roman jurisprudence never allows the surrender of the accused till he shall have met his accusers face to face, and have had opportunity for defense, against the accusation.—In v. 18, the older manuscript authorities have it—“brought none accusation of such *evil things*—such offenses or crimes—as I had supposed.

In v. 19, the word “superstition,” having in usage a bad sense, does not fairly represent the original, which in this connection demands a sense not offensive to the Jews. It

meant—not of their own *religion*—their own religious ideas and worship. We must bear in mind that Festus is speaking to King Agrippa—a man who “believed the prophets” (26: 27) and to Bernice, a sister of Drusilla who is said (24: 24) to have been a Jewess. In this presence no word which could place the Jewish religion in an odious light would be admissible.

In v. 21, the word “Augustus” applies to the then reigning Emperor, being used as a term of honor—the august one—and not designating Octavius to whom the Roman Senate first gave this honorary title.

22. Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To-morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

The grammatical form of this verb—[“would hear”] by general usage requires this translation:—I myself *have been wishing* to hear the man. This assumes that he had heard of him—which is in the highest degree probable—and that his curiosity had been excited to hear something from his own lips. Indeed, it is not improbable that this desire was the occasion of his present visit.—Let it be noticed, moreover, that the word “hear” must have in this case its common and not its judicial sense. It was not the hearing of Paul’s case upon its merits and under a judicial prosecution; but simply hearing his own statement of this malicious prosecution and of his Christian faith and belief.

23. And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus’ commandment Paul was brought forth.

24. And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.

25. But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him.

26. Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O King Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write.

27. For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him.

This further prelude to Paul’s great defense before Festus and Agrippa sets forth yet again the special object which

Festus wishes to accomplish: viz., to obtain the aid of Agrippa in making out a proper presentation of Paul's case to send up with him to the emperor at Rome. It would be very unreasonable to send up a prisoner with no account of the crimes laid to his charge.

This was specious and plausible; and would really have been fair and honorable, but for the fact that Festus had heard the case through and through and had become convinced that the charges were false and malicious. This being so, the only right course for him was to declare the accused innocent and set him at liberty.—The present movement therefore was only a makeshift to disguise his own wrong and to trump up some justification for sending Paul to Rome under his appeal to Cæsar. Himself had compelled Paul to make this appeal in order to prevent his case from going before the Jews at Jerusalem, or from being again thrown upon Festus—whom to his surprise (we may suppose) he had learned that he could not trust.



CHAPTER XXVI.

This defense before Agrippa opens with a very felicitous and complimentary introduction (vs. 1-3); touches comprehensively his early Pharisaic life and the great point of his indictment before the Jews (vs. 4-8); alludes yet more fully to his career as a persecutor of the saints—in which career he was approaching Damascus (vs. 9-11); where the Lord Jesus Christ met and converted him (vs. 12-15), and gave him his commission to the Gentiles (vs. 16-18) which he could not decline but which brought upon him the wrath of the Jews (vs. 19-21); how God sustained him, and what testimony he had borne for God and his gospel (vs. 22, 23); Festus rudely interrupts him (v. 24, 25); Paul turns to Agrippa (vs. 26-29); the result of this apology (v. 30-32).

1. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:

2. I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because I shall answer

for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews :

3. Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

This last of Paul's four or five apologies has most analogy with the first (Acts 22:) spoken from the castle stairs before the maddened Jewish populace, yet differs from that to correspond with the changed circumstances—that being in special answer to the charge of profaning the temple and of hostility to the Jewish law:—this, to the general charge of having abandoned Judaism and espoused Christianity. It is well to observe that the present defense is made definitely, not to Festus and not to the Jewish people, but to King Agrippa. Agrippa presides; he formally gives Paul permission to speak in his own defense (v. 1); and to him Paul makes his final appeal (v. 26-29).

This king was educated a Jew; had a high reputation for proficiency in the Jewish law, and professedly believed the prophets (v. 27). Hence the way was fully open for Paul to show that his acceptance of "the faith of Christ" was in harmony with the prophets, and did by no means put him in antagonism with their authority, their teaching, or their spirit. Rather, the Jesus whom he now accepted as Lord and Messiah was fulfilling the old prophets, and particularly, that evangelization of the Gentiles which had been at once the burden and the glory of their predictions.

4. My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;

5. Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

6. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:

7. Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

8. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

Though born in Tarsus, Paul was sent to Jerusalem very early in life for his education. Elsewhere he speaks more definitely than here of having been a pupil of Gamaliel (Acts 22: 3). To all those Jews who have been foremost in this prosecution he can appeal to testify that he was an earnest and rigorous Pharisee. According to the highest

standard of their faith and practice, his Pharisaic life had been without a blemish.—The English phrase—"most straitest"—strains a point to the damage of the pure English idiom; but Paul's Greek words are as strong as their idiom can be made.

Noticeably Paul brings out here with great precision the vital points of the indictment brought against him by the Jews:—viz., The *Great Messianic Hope* which had inspired all the ancient prophets and had been the strength and the glory of their sublime future. This hope had breathed its spirit into their constant worship; it had stood ever before them as the supreme good which they were aspiring to attain. Paul's mission from God was definitely this—to show that this great central promise had been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. In his own well chosen words (Acts 17: 3)—he "reasoned out of the scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen from the dead; and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is the Messiah." For those old prophets held not only that the nation's Messiah must needs suffer death, but must also rise from this death to immortal glory and to supreme power at the right hand of the Father.—This involved fact of his resurrection sprung the question which was so sharply contested by the Sadducean wing of his Jewish persecutors—in view of which Paul puts the point to Agrippa (v. 8);—"Why, if God raises the dead, should it be judged by you incredible?" This is the form of Paul's question;—Supposing it to be taught that God raises the dead—why should you judge this incredible? Is any thing too hard for the Almighty?

9. I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

10. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.

11. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

V. 9 connects logically with v. 5—the intervening verses being a slight digression—thus; Living in the spirit of a most rigid Pharisee, I did honestly think that I ought to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This, as ye well know, was the current and strong belief of

the Pharisees. I carried out my convictions by imprisoning the saints in Jerusalem and by giving my voice for their death.

"Punished them oft in every synagogue," involves the historic fact that the punishments of scourging and of physical torture were inflicted publicly in the synagogue. Jesus had forewarned his disciples that they "would be scourged in the synagogues" (Matt. 10: 17 and 23: 34). Those persecutors assumed that this was their religious duty, and that even in putting heretics to death they were "doing God service." Consequently in their view, the tortures of the lash and even the shedding of life-blood were in no sort incongruous with their sacred synagogue or its religious worship.—"Compelled them to blaspheme"—in the sense of denouncing the name of Jesus; disowning and even cursing that sacred name. This was the usual test by which men, arrested on suspicion of being Christians, might escape this suspicion and all molestation. To this blaspheming they were pressed by all the terrors of torture and the dread of a cruel death.—"Exceeding mad"—excessively infuriated against them; frenzied with the wildest fanaticism. Paul has now a vivid sense of his horrible frenzy in those days when he hunted the disciples of Jesus even abroad into foreign cities.

12. Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

13. At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

14. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

15. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

It was in the very height of this frenzy, just as the distant towers of Damascus broke upon his view and he was forecasting the havoc he was soon to make among the unsuspecting sheep of the Christian fold—just then there flashed down upon him from heaven that light which outshone the sun and which prostrated to the earth both himself and his posse of brutal, perhaps blood-thirsty men.—The voice that broke upon his ear from the midst of that effulgent glory was in his own Hebrew dialect, asking—not

in appalling thunder tones, but in gentle, loving accents—Why art thou persecuting me? What have I done to deserve such outrage from thy hand? And why shouldst thou so cruelly torture thyself? For it must be cruel to thyself to kick against the goads of a self-accusing conscience.

When Saul had asked—"Who art thou, Lord?" and had been answered—"I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," the whole wondrous scene was explained. Then the conviction rushed upon his soul—I have been in arms against the Son of God! All this burning hostility, this maddened frenzy, has been against the great God and against his beloved Son!—And yet, the voice of Jesus to my soul breathes the tenderness of sympathy and of love!—Thus the piercing conviction of folly, madness and sin, coupled with the touching sympathy and love of Jesus, manifested despite of his great guilt, subdued his heart and he became entirely another man. This was true conversion.

16. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

17. Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

18. To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

All that is said elsewhere of his being restored to sight through the ministry of Ananias and of his receiving baptism is appropriately omitted here. Paul proceeds at once to the point most vital in this argument before Agrippa—viz: to show how Jesus commissioned him to preach this gospel of salvation to the Gentiles. He was to testify and proclaim both what he had already seen and whatever else might be shown him in subsequent revelations. The more special purposes of his mission to the Gentiles are here unfolded in terms mostly borrowed from the prophet Isaiah. (Isa. 42: 6, 7, and 35: 4, 5): "I will give thee [the Messiah] for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes and to bring them that sit in darkness out of the prison-houses."—The grand change wrought when men pass from idol-worship to God's worship; from the rebellion of sin to the obedience of love;—is well put here as "turning men from darkness to light and from Satan's power to God's."—The fruit;

of this change are also indicated ; “ Receiving forgiveness of their sins and an *inheritance* among all the sanctified through faith in Jesus.”—What mission could be more sublimely glorious than this? It inspired Isaiah’s grandest strains of prophetic song ; and when Paul came to find his mission-work portrayed in those songs, it fired his heart with its noblest enthusiasm.

Let no reader fail to notice the logical force of putting Paul’s great commission to preach Christ to the Gentiles in terms borrowed from Isaiah—in the point that it testified so conclusively that the Gentiles were *in* the great gospel scheme of Jehovah even from the earliest ages of time ; and that the execution of this gospel scheme devolved in the outset legitimately upon the Jews—God’s ancient people.

19. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision :

20. But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

21. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

Consequently, O king, I was not disobedient to such a vision from heaven. How could I be?—How can you blame me for accepting such a commission, or for throwing into it the utmost energies of my soul?—Forthwith I began to preach Jesus Christ in Damascus ; then in Jerusalem ; soon among the Gentiles, exhorting men everywhere to repentance and to such works as legitimately follow it. Thou knowest how I have preached righteousness, and surely thou canst appreciate why I have done it.—Now it was for this offense that the Jews caught me in their temple and sought to kill me.

22. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come :

23. That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light both unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

“ Help from God ” in the line of protection against those attempts upon my life. Without such help, I had been a prey to their teeth. With it, I stand up still, bearing my witnessing testimony for God to all men of low rank or of high.

There is a question of textual authority over the Greek

word for “witnessing” the form now most approved [*marturomai*] having the sense of bearing testimony :—the other form [*marturoumai*] would mean—being accredited ; receiving the endorsement of all who have known me. The latter word in its legitimate sense would involve some difficulties, since it would require large qualifications. The first form (as above) evades these difficulties and should be preferred.

In my preaching I have kept myself fully within the doctrines preached by all the old prophets and even by Moses—this allusion to Moses being made specially emphatic.—In v. 23, Paul uses, not the common Greek word for “that,” but another, having the sense of *if* or “*whether*”. His word suggests that the great questions of prophetic interpretation and significance turned upon these two points: (1.) Whether Christ *could suffer* ; whether it were in God’s plan that the Messianic King of Israel was to be a sufferer at all—*i. e.*, was to reach his final victory through the suffering of death ; or, on the contrary, through an unvarying career of prosperous victory and triumph :—and (2.) Whether he were to rise from the dead, the first in order, going before all his people as the first illustrious instance of a resurrection from the grave.—Plainly, Paul’s interpretation of the scriptures assumes the affirmative on both these points ; for he maintains that the Messiah of the old prophets was to be a sufferer, and was to rise from the dead :—and then become in very truth the glorious light of God to all the Gentile nations. These themes of the glorious gospel which he preaches kindled upon his soul as he gave them utterance here before Agrippa.

24. And as he thus spake for himself. Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself ; much learning doth make thee mad.

25. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus ; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

It is doubtful whether Festus had taken into his dark soul very much of that light of God which shone forth in the words of Paul. If we may assume that he had little or no sense of the great truths which were kindling the soul of Paul to such eloquence and deep emotion, we can readily account for this rude interruption and this disrespectful insinuation :—Paul thou art becoming unduly excited over this matter ! So much study of the old books has turned thee over into mania—a sort of madness.—Respectfully

but firmly, Paul affirms his mental soundness and declares that he utters only words of truth and sound-mindedness.

26. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely : for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him ; for this thing was not done in a corner.

27. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets ? I know that thou believest.

28. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

29. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

This sudden turning from Festus to Agrippa seems to say :—I could scarcely expect *you* to understand me on these themes. In fact, I have been speaking, not to you but to King Agrippa. He understands these subjects (as you do not). Before him, therefore, I have spoken freely, or *boldly*, as this Greek word often signifies,—*i. e.*, with no constraint but with the utmost self-assurance. He knows what this gospel of Jesus Christ means,—how it is built upon the foundation of the old prophets, and is simply the unfolding and fulfillment of what was the burden and glory of their predictions. None of these great things of the gospel and none of its benign results can have escaped his knowledge. They have transpired before the eyes of the world.—Then, turning suddenly to the king, he asks :—Dost thou believe the old Hebrew prophets ? I need not await thy answer ; I know that thou believest.

Agrippa felt the force of this pungent appeal, and his soul half bowed before its persuasive power. “In a little”—[so his words may be taken to mean]—in some small measure, thou hast persuaded me to become one of that dishonored class called “Christians”—the followers of Christ.—It should be noticed that up to this time the word “Christian” had not come into honor. It was not in use by Christ’s disciples to designate themselves as his followers, but was a term of reproach, involving whatever dishonor attached then to Jesus the Nazarene. Hence Agrippa may be understood to say :—“You have partly persuaded me to identify myself with that despised class of people ; for certainly I can not but see that they have truth, and indeed much noble and grand truth, on their side.”—Paul’s quick response is in the highest style of terse, grand, and earnest utterance. “I can pray God that not thou alone, but all who hear me,

were not only in little but in much—not alone in part but in whole, all that I am to-day, except these chains which you see manacled my arms! I can not pray that you may wear such chains. But every thing else in my soul—all else of my sweet experience of this gospel's life and power, I would to God ye might all enjoy even as I do this day."

The passage—"Almost thou persuadest," etc., is not without its difficulties, and hence has been interpreted variously. Alford, Meyer and Hackett assume that the answer is not altogether serious, but rather conceals real emotion and a measure of conviction by a sort of jest—You think to make short work of persuading me; you seem to assume it an easy thing. They supply the word for *time* after the Greek [en oligo]—(in short time). Then Paul's reply would mean—"I could pray that whether in short time or in long; whether with ease or with difficulty,—not thou alone, but all others who hear me," etc.—The main question of interpretation turns in part upon the noun to be supplied after the Greek adjective [for "little" or small]; whether it shall give time or quantity; and also upon the true text in Paul's reply (v. 29), where conflicting authorities give us—some *great*, others *much* [either *megalo* or *pollo*].—It is generally conceded that the English version—"almost"—is not sustained by Greek usage. We must either assume a certain evasiveness—"You think it the work of a minute to persuade me to espouse the odious name, Christian;"—or the more serious answer—"You do in part persuade me; your arguments have force, I must admit."

30. And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:

31. And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.

32. Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cesar.

The result of this hearing and vindication was soon reached: Nothing in this prisoner deserving death or even bonds. Especially king Agrippa declared to Festus—This prisoner might be set at liberty on the spot if he had not put his case out of your power by his appeal to Cesar.—The result as bearing on the question before Festus—viz., How to represent the case in his written statement to Cesar—must have been substantially this:—*No charge against him*. His Jewish countrymen disliked him and sought his life. Thus they compelled him to appeal to thee. That is all.

CHAPTER XXVII.

This chapter gives in detail the circumstances of Paul's voyage from Cesarea toward Rome as far as to the shipwreck on the island of Malta.

1. And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.

2. And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.

The duty of Festus to send Paul to Rome now became imperative, admitting no further excuse for delay.——What sort of statement of the case he ultimately made up to send with Paul to the emperor, does not appear; how he disguised his own cowardly and selfish concessions to Jewish malignity, to avoid the danger to himself of their hostility; and how far he followed the more equitable views of Agrippa, we are left to conjecture.

Paul with certain other prisoners, to be sent to Rome for trial, were entrusted to a Roman centurion, "Julius," whose record throughout is fair. The number of soldiers in this military guard would not exceed, and might fall considerably below, one hundred—the complement for one centurion.

"Adramyttium" was a port in the province of Mysia on the Hellespont. This vessel, therefore, had, supposably, reached the limit of her outward destination, and was now on her return, coasting along the Asiatic shore.——"*Meaning to sail*," should rather be—*about to sail*, unto the ports along the coast of Asia.

This "Aristarchus" is manifestly the same Thessalonian of whom we read as attending Paul (Acts 20: 4). The Italic word "*one*," implying some one unknown to the reader, is not only superfluous but misleading. Luke should rather be understood to say—That brother Aristarchus, spoken of before, is still with us.

3. And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.

4. And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

5. And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.

This coasting vessel naturally touched at the important city, Sidon. Paul knew there were Christian brethren here. Julius very kindly gave him leave to go ashore and visit them.—“Courteously” is philanthropically, in the spirit of a generous philanthropy—love of human kind.

The sea phrase—“sailing *under* Cyprus,” means under a lee shore which broke the force of the strong west wind. Their more direct course would have lain to the left or west of this island; but the strong west wind forbid this, and compelled them to sail *under* Cyprus. Consequently, after rounding this island, they skirted the coasts of Cilicia and Pamphylia. Having reached Myra, they landed.

6. And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.

7. And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone;

8. And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea.

9. Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them,

10. And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.

11. Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

12. And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south-west and north-west.

13. And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.

Here Julius found a merchant vessel from Alexandria (Egypt) in the wheat trade, bound for Rome, which furnished him the means he had desired of sailing direct for his destination. These transport ships were large enough to accommodate several hundred passengers besides their cargo. Josephus speaks of being one of six hundred passengers when, on a similar voyage to Italy, he suffered shipwreck.—From Myra, their direct route would take them north of Crete; but here, again, contrary winds compelled them to run under its lee shore—*i. e.*, along its southern coast.—Their progress had been very slow. The favorable

season for their voyage had now past. The "fast" (v. 9) is doubtless the well-known Jewish fast on the great day of atonement—the tenth day of the seventh month [Tisri], corresponding closely to the time of the autumnal equinox. After this period navigation in those seas became very unsafe. Paul advised strongly against attempting to proceed further. But the centurion had more confidence in the pilot and the ship-master, and they were for pushing forward.—The moment they had passed beyond the protection of this island, Crete, they came into the region swept at that season by the great storms from the east.

14. But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon;

15. And when the ship was caught and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.

16. And running under a certain island which is called Claudia, we had much work to come by the boat:

17. Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven.

Scarcely out from under the lee shore of Crete, they were struck by one of those fearful north-east cyclones which sweep those seas at that tempestuous season. Luke's descriptive word suggests "the typhoon"—his Greek adjective being from this root. Our accepted version calls it Euroclydon [the great *eastern wave*]; but the better sustained text has *Euraquilon* [Eurus Aquilo]—a north-east wind-storm, otherwise known as a "Levanter," from its frequency in the Levant.—Raging with only slight and partial intermissions, like this, for fourteen days in succession, it has always been the dread of mariners, and was at once so probable and so terrible as to make navigation during that season of the year very perilous.—When this storm struck their ship, its force was resistless. They could not look the storm *in the eye* (so the Greek); therefore, consigning the ship to the wind, we were borne along, says the narrator, at its mercy.—Running under the lee shore of the island Claudia, they took advantage of this comparative quiet to get their boat into position for use. Under the full severity of the storm, this would have been impossible. Even now it was accomplished only with great difficulty. "To come by the boat"—is to become thoroughly masters of it, so that it should be at their service for use in the pending emergency.—Having lifted the boat—*i. e.*, upon shipboard, or lashed her to

the vessel's side, as the case may be, their next measure was to strengthen their ship by "undergirding"—a process known in nautical phrase by the verb "*frap*." To frap a ship, constructed in the style of that age, was to pass huge cables or chains several times round her, under and over, as raftsmen would strengthen a huge raft to prevent its being parted asunder. The ancient ship was much nearer the form of a great raft than the modern.—Then their next great fear was lest they might be driven into the quicksands [the Syrtis—Greek] which lay off south-west of them and near the African coast. This was the dread of mariners in those seas—a region of dangerous shoals, quicksands, toward which this merciless Levanter was driving them. To retard their drift motion towards this Syrtis, they lowered all sail—the only thing they could do—and so were borne along.

18. And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship;

19. And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

20. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

Luke does not say definitely what (v. 18) was thrown overboard to lighten the ship; nor (v. 19) what was again thrown over with their own hands, called "tackling," but judging from the Greek word—(the apparatus, furniture)—it was perhaps their personal baggage, effects—to which every man put his own hand as his personal sacrifice to save life. This storm had now been upon them nearly fourteen days (v. 20) and was still raging with little intermission, so that all hope that we should be saved was taken away. Under such circumstances, men throw overboard any thing, if so they may improve the possible chances of being saved.

21. But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

22. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.

23. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

24. Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

25. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

26. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.

During all these fearful days and more fearful nights of anxiety and labor, men neither thought or cared much for their meals.—Here Paul comes to the front—a man of God standing forth before those idol-worshipping men—himself with a very few Christian friends—Luke and Aristarchus—possibly a very few others, the only Christian men there. In this emergency Paul shows himself a strong man, self-poised, of great resources, and above all, *a man of God*, divinely guided and prophetically inspired for the occasion.—He reminds them first of their great mistake in rejecting his advice to winter at Crete. This allusion might naturally suggest that his advice now is worthy of their attention.—Here he has words of cheer for them all, sent him the previous night by God's good angel. Beautifully Paul witnesses to the faithfulness of the God to whom he belongs, and whom it is his joy to serve, and who never forsakes his children in their emergencies. This night the angel said to me—"Thou must stand before Cæsar"—which means escape through these perils of the sea and arriving in Rome at length. More than this, God has mercifully spared all these men, both passengers and crew, giving them to thee, in the sense of saving them for thy sake.—Now, then, be of good cheer (said Paul), for I believe every word God has said to me by his angel.—However, we must needs be wrecked upon some island. But every life shall be spared.—We may try to conceive the inspirations of hope that thrilled the souls of those two hundred and seventy-six men when these words of one brave, fearless man fell on their ears.

27. But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country;

28. And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.

29. Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.

In the darkness of midnight and amid the fearfulness of this tempest, the seamen caught some sign of drawing near land. In explanation of this, seafaring men ascribe it to the peculiar sound of the breakers near the shore. Is this due to the echoes from the rocks and headlands, or to the unusual violence and the deepened roar?—It put them upon sounding their depth, and this soon showed that they were coming into more shallow water. More anchors are

thrown out and they prayed that day might come! Perils were reaching their climax.

30. And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under color as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,

31. Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye can not be saved.

32. Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.

At this critical moment the sailors planned to lower the boat under a certain pretext; to leap aboard and save themselves, leaving passengers and soldiers to their fate. Paul's quick eye saw through their scheme and his ready good sense brought him to the centurion to baffle it. It was the work of a moment to cut her ropes and set her adrift.—We may notice that the prediction—Not a man shall lose his life in this pending wreck (v. 22) yet hinges upon the appropriate means for saving those lives. The end was not ordained as certain whether appropriate means were used or not. The end was certain enough, but the means must needs be no less certain.

33. And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing.

34. Wherefore I pray you to take some meat; for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.

35. And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat.

36. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat.

37. And we were in all in the ship two hundred three score and sixteen souls.

38. And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.

Another appropriate means for saving all these lives was the taking of necessary food. Their long fasting had reached the point of real danger, the more so because the wreck and the exposure perhaps for a night and a day in the great cold deep were yet to come. With noble self-possession and wisdom Paul allays their fears, re-assures them of their personal deliverance; and then, having blessed and broken food, began himself to eat, and so brought them into such com-

posure and confidence that appetite came and they also took refreshment.—At this point the total number on board is given—276. The principal freight of this vessel was wheat—wisely reserved to be the last thing sacrificed.

39. And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.

40. And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.

41. And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmovable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.

42. And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out and escape.

43. But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land:

44. And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

When day broke they did not recognize the land. But they saw the mouth of a creek which might make for them a sort of harbor, and a shore upon which they might hope to beach their vessel. For this therefore they laid their course and labored to get sail-power enough to carry the ship into this harbor. The action of counter-currents baffled this purpose; the ship grounded, and of course was soon torn to pieces by the violence of the waves.

The soldiers knew the consequences to themselves under Roman law of the escape of prisoners entrusted to their keeping, and therefore advised the cold murder of them all. It seems to have been due to the centurion's personal regard for Paul that he resisted their demand and gave directions for the escape of all to land.

Reviewing the scenes of this chapter, the attentive reader will be struck with the marvelous accuracy of Luke's narrative; with the easy identification of numerous points here given with the well-known localities of sea and land; with the laws of storms and sea-currents along their route; and not least, with the striking developments in Paul's character—a man who rises in our estimation under the pressure of every emergency. How readily and fully did he secure the esteem and confidence of this centurion, and gain an

influence also over this whole company, almost three hundred in number, and make an impression upon them which they could never forget.

This narrative is no fancy picture, coined in the fertile brain of some author of fiction. No narrative has ever appeared in human history bearing more unmistakable proofs of veracity, sustaining its historic claims with more varied and abundant evidence.

Thought of as a chapter in Paul's history of personal sufferings, it may be suggested that this was not his first experience in "perils of water." In 2 Cor. 11: 25, he wrote—"Thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep." Recalling the date of this epistle (A. D. 57), and comparing it with the date of this voyage (A. D. 60) we may spare ourselves the mistake of counting this experience into that catalogue made up three years before.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

Scenes at Melita; the viper on Paul's hand (vs. 1-6); the healing of diseases (vs. 7-10); the voyage resumed and the arrival at Rome (vs. 11-16); Paul brings his case before the chief men of the Jews (v. 17-21); at their request expounds to them his gospel testimony from their scriptures (v. 22-29); Paul's two years' labors at Rome close the book (vs. 30, 31).

1. And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.

2. And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.

After all had reached land in safety, fulfilling God's good word of promise to Paul (27: 24), they ascertained that the island was Melita—well known in modern times as Malta. The identity of that island with the modern Malta is proved by varied and abundant testimony;—*e. g.*, traditional evidence sustains it; Malta lies in the track of a vessel driven from Crete by a north-east storm: the reputed

locality of the wreck agrees with Luke's account; the Alexandrian ship in which they re-embarked would naturally winter there; the subsequent course of the voyage to Patoli would take them from this island to that city.

Malta is sixty miles from the southern point of Sicily and two hundred from the African coast. It is seventeen miles in length; nine in its greatest breadth, and sixty in circumference.—By the Greeks and Romans, its people were called “barbarians,” because their spoken language was neither Greek nor Latin, but a Semitic dialect of the Phœnician stock. They were by no means a “barbarous” people in their civilization or their spirit. Luke testifies honorably to their kindness in receiving most hospitably this shipwrecked group—soldiers, prisoners and crew.—“The present rain”—the rain of this terrible storm still pouring down upon them; and also the cold, due to the lateness of the season and the long continued rain.

3. And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

4. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

5. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

6. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

Paul, always one of the most active of men, gathered a bundle of sticks from among the rocks along the shore, and unawares, among them a viper torpid with cold. Thrown upon the fire, the heat soon brought him to activity. He sprang and fastened himself upon Paul's hand.—“Vengeance” in their conception, was the avenging god of justice [Dike]—a power that works evermore toward and unto the punishment of the wrong-doer.

In this critical moment the God of all providence fulfilled his promise to his faithful disciples (Mark 16: 17, 18); “They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them.” This venomous viper either inflicted no wound, or the wound was miraculously made harmless.—The people were expecting every moment that his arm would become inflamed with the deadly poison, or

that himself would suddenly fall dead. But after the lapse of time had fully shown that no harm had befallen him, they changed their minds and said—That man, so far from being a murderer whom justice will not suffer to live, is verily a god.—Thus God's providence is every-where bringing Paul into notice and honor as his own faithful servant.

7. In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.

8. And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux; to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.

9. So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:

10. Who also honored us with many honors; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.

In that vicinity lay the landed estates of the chief man of the island, *i. e.*, the Roman magistrate, first in authority upon the island. The population of this island was small, so that this Roman officer held a lower rank than either proconsul or propaetor. He was only a "*first man*" [protos]. Luke designates him with entire precision. Two ancient inscriptions have been discovered in this island which designate the chief Roman officer by the word which Luke uses here.

"Lodged us three days *courteously*" means *kindly*, with generous and hearty hospitality. At this time his father lay sick with fever and dysentery. Paul went into his sick-room, and there, with prayer and imposition of hands, restored him to health. This resulted in bringing to him other sick people and in their being healed.—Such tokens of honor as they could render ensued, and abundant supplies for their comfort on their voyage when they embarked.

11. And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.

12. And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days.

13. And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli:

14. Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.

15. And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came

to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns; whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

16. And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

This period of three months brought the opening of navigation.—We may notice that again they find passage in one of those Alexandrian merchant vessels employed in the carrying trade from Alexandria to Rome.

A sail of eighty miles brought them to Syracuse, the chief city of the well known island of Sicily for a stay of three days. This stop may have been for purposes of trade, or for favorable wind.—This “compass”—in the sense of a circuitous course—may have been due to the sinuosities of the shore and the necessity of keeping close to it under the stress of foul weather.—Rhegium—now Reggio—was an Italian sea-port, opposite to the north-east point of Sicily.—This south wind being propitious for their voyage, they move on to Puteoli, eight miles north-west from Neapolis—the modern Naples, and one of the most important ports south of Rome—said to have been the entrepot of the Alexandrian trade with Rome. At this place they found Christian brethren. Perhaps it was out of deference to Paul’s wishes that they were allowed to remain there one week and so have a Sabbath with them.—The brethren at Rome have now heard of the approach of Paul and his party, and two delegations start out to meet him. The advance party met him at Appii Forum, about forty miles from Rome; the later party at Tres Taberni [the “Three Taverns,”] thirty miles out from the great city. Paul met these brethren with joyful heart, thanking God that his long journey was nearing its consummation and that he might hopefully soon behold the city he had so long planned and prayed to visit.—Probably the names of some of these friends who met him here may be found in Romans 16—among that large group to whom he sent his Christian salutations two years before this first visit to the great metropolis.—Arriving at the city, the centurion consigns Paul to the proper authorities who generously allow him to dwell in a house by himself under the guard of a single soldier. This exceptional indulgence may have been due to the favorable impression Paul had made upon Julius, the centurion in charge of him from Cesaræa, or to

the written document sent with him by Festus, or to both combined.

17. And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

18. Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me.

19. But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar: not that I had ought to accuse my nation of.

20. For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

21. And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judæa concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee.

Paul would naturally wish to know what reception he might expect from the leading Jews of the city, and particularly, whether his old enemies at Jerusalem were still pursuing their vindictive purpose, and would meet him here in Rome to renew their prosecution. Therefore, having invited them to his house he laid his case before them and found—we may suppose to his joy—that they had heard nothing about Paul from their brethren at Jerusalem. Nothing had come to them, either by letters from Judea, or through brethren coming from that country to this great city of the empire.

22. But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every-where it is spoken against.

23. And when they had appointed him a day there came many to him into his lodging: to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

24. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

25. And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,

26. Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive.

27. For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and under-

stand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

28. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.

29. And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

They would hear Paul's doctrine and faith from his own lips, and also his report of this Christian sect, of which they seem to know only that every-where it was gain-sayed—almost universally the Jews from every quarter of the Roman world spake against it.—Here, therefore, again, Paul testifies of the gospel kingdom, expanding the great Messianic argument from their own prophets and from Moses, through the hours of the entire day. This would allow him time to present with great fullness the important passages out of Moses and the prophets which bear upon the great Messianic doctrine.

Here, as elsewhere, in the result, some believed, and some believed not. The earnest, burning heart of Paul is thrown into the torturing agony which thousands of gospel preachers have felt so painfully—that of seeing some of their hearers turn away after being almost persuaded, to “go back with a perpetual backsliding,” morally hardening themselves to a more hopeless doom. In the presence of such self-hardening, Paul was reminded of the words of the Lord to Isaiah which forewarned him that his messages to his people would, in the case of many at least, meet this very reception, and despite of all he could do to save them, end in this moral ruin. The passage is from Isa. 6: 9, and is quoted more or less fully five times in the New Testament other than here—*i. e.*, by each of the four evangelists, and by Paul (Rom. 11: 8). See Matt. 13: 14, 15—Mark 4: 12—Luke 8: 10—John 12: 40.—These quotations are naturally all made from the Septuagint, yet with slight variations, some bringing out the human agency more and others less prominently ;—(“their eyes *have they closed*, lest they should see with their eyes . . . lest they should be converted and I should heal them.”)—[For a more full discussion of the passage, see my notes on Isa. 6: 9, 10].

No misapprehension of the passage can be more abusive to God or more false, in fact, to its spirit than that which imputes this moral hardening of sinners under gospel light to God's design and purpose, as if it were an end of his own seeking and were truly according to his heart.

As often before, Paul closes here with solemnly assuring them that if they—Jews—repelled this gospel, it would go to the Gentiles, who in large masses would receive it joyfully.—Thus closed this long day's discourse. The Jews departed, not to dismiss the subject at once from further consideration, but to debate it among themselves with earnest reasonings. Over the ultimate result the curtain drops and leaves us with no statistics as to converts from this day's labor.

30. And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him.

31. Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

Now for two full years Paul's own hired house became his synagogue for preaching services—from which the restraints upon his personal liberty forbad him to remove, but hindered nobody from coming. There, accordingly, he preached the kingdom of God and the things which concern the Lord Jesus with the freest utterance and no hinderance.

Luke's special objects in compiling this book being now accomplished, he brings it to its close. This was not the end of Paul's life, nor of his gospel labors. For reasons not known, Luke did not deem it wise to extend this history of Paul's work further.

It is very probable that Paul was released near this time—certainly before the first great persecution under Nero, early in A. D. 64—and that he resumed his gospel labors, probably visiting Spain and revisiting the old scenes of his earlier work in Greece, Macedonia, and in the western provinces of Asia. His pastoral epistles to Titus and to Timothy, must be located several years later than the close of this book. The testimony of the early church fathers concur to locate his martyrdom under Nero in the spring of A. D. 68. (See Introduction to 2 Timothy in my "Shorter Epistles)."

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